Research Report

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Seeking Transformational Policies for Gender Equality in South Korea

Conference Paper Annex

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About This Report

In most countries of the Asia-Pacific, significant pay gaps, inflexible workplace cultures, and social expectations of women as the primary caregivers for children and households pressure women to withdraw from the labor force. Most women's work at home is also not considered contributing to the economy. These gender inequalities are often part of a larger pattern across society despite the implementation of policies and laws to promote gender equity. The pervasiveness and normality of existing gender systems can often make it difficult to see how deeply gender inequalities pervade society. Overcoming such barriers to achieving equality requires transformational approaches to changing the political, legal, and social environment.

The RAND Center for Asia Pacific Policy (CAPP) launched a Gender Equity Initiative in Asia-Pacific countries in September 2021. This annex contains conference papers written by subject matter experts in the Gender Equity workgroup comprised of scholars working in U.S., and South Korea-based academic and legal institutes. These papers supplement the prior report "Promoting Gender Equality in South Korea: Seeking Transformational Policies" report and should be useful to policymakers, the general public, and researchers who are interested in gender equity studies in South Korea.

Funding

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Summary

The RAND Gender Equity in South Korean Initiative brought together leaders from academia, government, and the legal profession to share the latest research as of and exchange ideas on how to improve gender attitudes and gender equity in various aspects of South Korean society. The goal of the conference is to encourage the incorporation of cutting-edge research into policy that best serves the public's interests as well as to connect and inform researchers and stakeholders. Materials produced for or presented at the forum are intended for audiences from a range of backgrounds and should be geared toward providing insights for practitioners and policymakers.

In the call for conference papers, we invite voluntary submissions across a range of topics related to improving gender attitudes and gender equity in households, labor market, legal systems and rights, and many other aspects of South Korean society. The authors of the selected conference papers were invited to present at the Gender Equality in South Korea Conference. RAND also provided a honorarium to the conference speakers.

Note: The papers used to inform this workshop were written by and represent the workshop participants. They do not represent the views of RAND nor have they been reviewed through RAND's quality assurance process.

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Appendix E. Seeking Transformational Policies for Gender Equality in South Korea: Conference Paper Annex

The Many Layers of Gender Inequality in South Korea

Jisoo Hwang (Seoul National University)

Gender equality has never been so complicated in South Korea. Not so long ago, with son preference and large gender gaps in education and labor market outcomes, female empowerment was considered necessary for further development. Today, gender equality has become one of the most controversial topics in South Korea, as men, women, and different generations disagree even on its status quo. Some argue that there is still discrimination against women in the labor market and that women are disadvantaged due to the large burden of household duties. Others argue that there is reverse gender discrimination now, because girls receive as much human capital investments as boys but policies such as gender quotas could provide inequitable favoritism. Disagreements are fueling feminism as well as anti-feminism, leading to political polarization particularly among the young generation.

Most of the disagreements stem from the reality that there are indeed multiple, often inconsistent, layers of gender inequality in South Korea today. As shown in Choi & Hwang (2015, 2020), evidence of deeply rooted son preference has nearly disappeared over the past few decades (Choi and Hwang, 2015; Choi and Hwang, 2020). The sex ratio at birth has leveled out at the natural range and parents now devote as much educational spending on their daughters as they do on their sons. The gender gap in college enrollment has also diminished, with as many girls going to college as boys. This means that unlike previous generations, young men in South Korea today would not have experienced these forms of preferential treatment relative to their female siblings or classmates growing up. If anything, they would deem unfair that only men need to serve in the military, and hence enter the labor market at a later age than their female classmates.

However, among men and women currently in the labor market and marriage market, we observe some familiar gender gaps. Female labor force participation rate by age depicts an M-shaped pattern because many women quit work in their thirties upon childbirth and return to the workforce when their children are older. Partly due to these career interruptions, the gender wage gap in South Korea remains the highest among OECD countries, at 31 percent compared to the average of 11.7 percent (OECD, 2022). In sharp contrast to the marriage pattern for men, college-educated women are less likely to be married than women without college degrees, so that the term “gold misses” has been coined to describe single women with high socioeconomic status (Hwang, 2016). Women continue to bear the lion’s share of household duties even if they

work (Hwang, Lee and Lee, 2019). The gap in housework and childcare time between working mothers and fathers with a young child in South Korea is nearly three times larger than that in the U.S.

South Korea seems to be stuck between the consequences of rapid economic growth and the remaining norms of the past. With unprecedented economic growth and educational expansion, women's economic status has improved drastically over the past few generations. Many young women have entered once male-dominated college majors and professions. Their potential to succeed in the labor market are incomparable to that of their parents' or grandparents' generation.

Norms, however, do not change as quickly. As a legacy of Confucianism, the belief that the woman should take care of children and that the man is the main breadwinner is ingrained in many people's minds and underlies many institutions. Workplaces are not family-friendly because employers are used to male breadwinners working overtime while their wives take care of the household. Households are not work-friendly because family members and schools are used to housewife mothers picking up their children early and being dedicated to their children's academic achievements. Even if younger generations have more egalitarian gender attitudes, it can be difficult for them to act in accordance with their beliefs when the minds and systems surrounding them have changed little.

Given such inconsistencies, policy design can be tricky. Policies that aim to give women more opportunities because they are currently in the minority at senior levels in firms or in government would be deemed unfair to young men who consider the current playing field equal. Meanwhile, policies that ignore women's disproportionate burden as main caretaker would be deemed unfair to working mothers who are strained under this dual role. Discussions about gender inequality in South Korea must start with acknowledging its many layers; issues exist which both men and women have good reasons to be frustrated about.

There can be no quick fixes to this "side effect" of rapid economic growth. Gendered policies such as female quotas or extension of maternity leave could risk reverse discrimination or unintentionally strengthen traditionally gendered practices. South Korea needs fundamental change in its institutions and in its culture. Some opportunities exist. Expanding workplace flexibility, enhancing the quality and accessibility of childcare and education, incentivizing shared parental leave are examples of policies that would help individuals – both men and women – navigate their lives less constrained by gender.

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Change and Persistence: A Social Psychological Perspective on Gender Norms in South Korea

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Abstract

South Korea has made significant reforms to the nation's institutional and legal systems to promote gender equality. Since its establishment in 1948, the constitution granted equal rights to men and women. In 1999, a law forbidding and regulating sex discrimination was enacted. The ministry of women (currently the ministry of gender equality and family) was founded in 2001 to promote gender equality in the workplace and to protect the victims of domestic and sexual violence. The "hoju" system, a family registry system that establishes the man as the legal head of the family, was abolished in 2008, supported by the constitutional court's decision that this system is unconstitutional. However, gender inequality persists in South Korea, manifesting as a significant gender pay gap and a high degree of gender-based violence. In the context of South Korea, laws appear to be only reflections of society's hope for gender equity. Societal norms in gender beliefs appear to remain enduring, despite top-down initiatives to enhance gender fairness. In democratic societies, ultimately, norms have to shift in order for outcomes to change. How do some norms change while others persist? Social psychology has documented the psychological mechanisms underlying change and persistence in societal norms and individual beliefs. The current paper aims to present a social psychological perspective on gender norms in South Korea. The social psychological literature of social change is reviewed and applied to the case of gender inequality in South Korea, with a particular focus on how gender norms have changed and persisted over time. Three major features of social change by minority influence are identified. First, there is a tipping point of societal tolerance toward minority dissents for social change to occur. Second, social change driven by minority influence tends to emerge gradually, often, after a latent period of no change. Third, social change occurs in multiple issues together, resulting in a Zeitgeist or a new cultural era. The significance of these findings for prospective policy measures to achieve gender equity in South Korea are discussed in the concluding section.

Keywords: social change; minority influence; gender norms; gender attitudes

South Korea has made significant advances to its economic, political, and legal systems and strengthened democratic values over the past several decades. Since the election of the first civilian president Kim Young-Sam in 1992 (after decades-long democratization movement against military dictatorship), South Korea has witnessed regular rotations of power. Furthermore, the impeachment of president Park Geun-hye demonstrated that the people of South Korea were able to turn their collective grievance to change the system from the bottom up. In this sense, South Korea appears to have a functioning democratic system where top-down institutional efforts and bottom-up citizens' voices influence each other to shape the nation's future.

In terms of gender issues, South Korea has made concerted efforts to provide legal and institutional structures with the tools necessary to eliminate gender discrimination and promote gender equality. South Korea's Constitution, established in 1948, states that 'all citizens shall be equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic, social or cultural life on account of sex, religion or social status.' Over the last two decades, there have been numerous notable legislative reforms that have been aimed at the elimination of gender discrimination. In 1999, the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act was enacted, and amended over the years. In accordance with the gender equality agenda, the Labor Standards Act and the Equal Employment Act have been passed and amended, and related committees have been formed to provide redress. The "hoju" (family head) system was abolished in 2008 after the constitutional court ruled that it was unconstitutional. Under this system, a patriarch headed the family, and the family lineage is succeeded solely by males. The family head system has long been identified as a major source of gender discrimination in marriage and family life, and thus women's movements have advocated for the abolition of this male-centered concept of family.

Despite these legislative developments, gender inequality remains persistent in South Korea. South Korea's gender pay gap (31.1%) was not only bigger than the OECD average (12%) but also the largest among all the OECD countries, according to statistics from 2021 (OECD, 2022). 2021 national employment figures indicated that the female employment rate (57.7%) was substantially lower than the male employment rate (75.2%), while female part time employment has been expanding and now accounts for 35% of total female employment, compared to 19% for male part time employment. Concerning parental leave, only 8.7% of the cases submitted to the Ministry of Employment of Labor in violation of the Labor Standards Act Article 74 (Protection of Pregnant Women and Nursing Mothers) from January 2020 to June 2022, were penalized.

According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MGEF)'s gender equality survey conducted in 2021 (vs. 2016), while traditional gender role beliefs (e.g., men provide financially and women take care of household chores) have been reduced, gender inequality in specific domains (e.g., parenting) has remained prevalent or has worsen due to the pandemic. This suggests that in contrast to the improvement in explicit gender equality beliefs, norms in family life and the workplace have not been changed as much.

The most concerning finding of this survey was that the perception of society's unequal treatment to women and men was largest among younger generations. For example, among those in their 20s, 29% of male respondents indicated that the society treats women unequally, compared to 73% for female respondents. In contrast, 24% of male respondents indicated that the society treats men unequally, compared to 4.3% for female respondents. This pattern contrasted sharply with the responses of the other age groups (older than 20s). This is puzzling because the younger the respondents were, the less they believed in traditional gender roles.

Gender inequality in South Korea appears to be a complex problem. How does gender inequality persist although people generally believe in gender equality? How does the rising generation of people in their 20s exhibit the greatest gender gap in the perception of society's unequal treatment of men and women, while at the same time holding less traditional gender role beliefs than older generations? This paper attempts to explain the complexities of the gender inequality problem in South Korea from a social psychological perspective. This does not mean that social psychology has answers to these questions. Rather, the goal of this paper is to initiate discussion among academic and policy researchers from various disciplines to uncover potential concerns that may be overlooked in some fields but well documented in others, hence defining future research possibilities for effective policy interventions.

Social psychology may have thoroughly documented certain causes and mechanisms of norm change and persistence, but it may have overlooked other mechanisms from other disciplines. At the same time, the social psychological mechanisms discussed in this paper may be useful for researchers from fields that have hitherto neglected such mechanisms in their disciplines. Understanding complex problems requires various viewpoints with multiple possible solutions (Hong and Page, 2004). I hope this paper is considered as part of the collective effort.

This paper is organized into three sections. The first section describes the social psychological mechanisms that drive social change and persistence as they are understood in the social psychology sub-field of attitude change and social influence. The second section combines the social psychological perspective with recent developments in cultural psychological work on cross cultural differences and global changes in norm strengths and sociological research on the topology of social and communication networks. The third section describes the social psychological mechanisms that explain different reactions of majority and minority members facing social change, causing intergroup conflict. In each section, I will discuss how these processes might help us understand South Korea's gender inequality.

The Social Psychology of Social Change and Persistence

Social change is defined as the process by which a society adopts an initially minority belief that eventually becomes shared by the majority and accepted as a norm (Moscovici, Lage and Naffrechoux, 1969). A large body of research on conformity and majority influences (Asch, 1951; Crutchfield, 1955; Newcomb, 1943; Sherif, 1963) could not adequately address the issue until Moscovici took the first step toward studying the power of minority influence. Moscovici

(1976) viewed minority dissenters as major catalysts of social change, assuming that if minority dissenters successfully influenced the majority's attitude toward the minority's position, they might possibly change group norms and, by extension, an entire society (Moscovici, 1976).

It was a surprising finding when Moscovici et al. (1969) discovered minority influence in his experiments that were intended to study conformity. He found that when a persuasive message was attributed to a minority, participants changed their attitude on issues that were not contained in the minority's focal message but were related to the topic. Attitude change in related issues was greater when the minority was consistent. This mechanism was called *indirect minority influence*.

Since then, numerous empirical evidence on indirect minority influence has been documented (Brandstätter et al., 1991; Clark III, 1990; Moscovici, 1980). Meta-analysis confirmed that minority opinions were particularly influential in related attitudes (especially when minorities were perceived consistent and their arguments were coherent) (Wood et al., 1994).

Moscovici sought to explain the psychological mechanisms of majority and minority influence in his conversion theory (Moscovici et al., 1980). The theory contrasts the differences underpinning the motivational and cognitive processes elicited when people encounter disagreement from members of large vs. small factions (majority vs. minority). Disagreement creates inner conflict, which leads to a motivation to reduce the conflict. This conflict is resolved via different influence processes depending on whether the source of disagreement is the majority or minority. Because the majority controls resources and power, adopting the mainstream attitude can be directly rewarding. Therefore, individuals may change attitudes simply to conform to the group's consensus. This conformity reflects motives of group belonging rather than an evaluation of the majority's argument. Consequentially, the immediate focal attitude change is typically superficial and may be easily reversed.

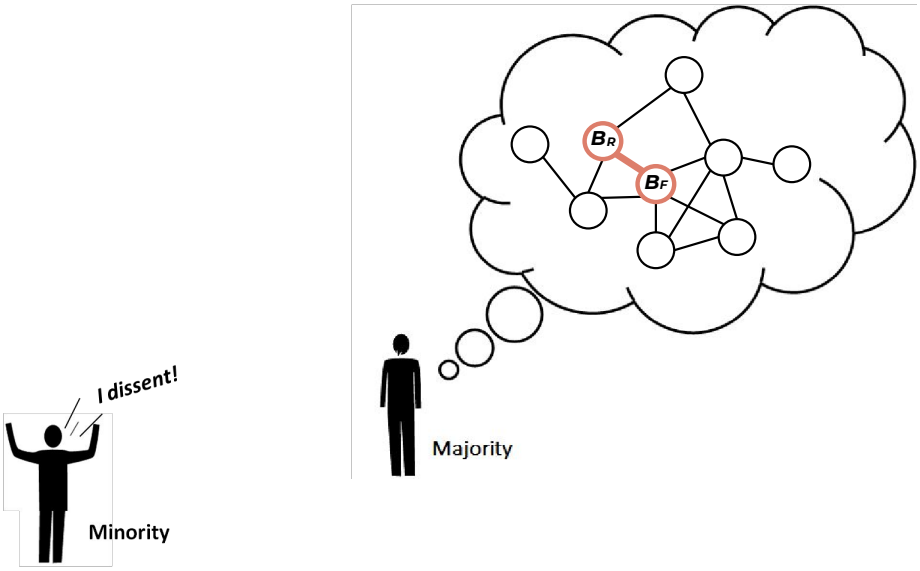
On the other hand, when someone in the society breaks the consensus, people take notice of this salient event and the minority idea attracts people's attention. Moscovici theorized that even when minority positions are not viewed as correct, their arguments are thoroughly scrutinized. Because contemplation takes time, belief validation results in delayed focal change. Also, because people carefully evaluate the uncommon ideas, attitude changes induced by exposure to minority ideas via this path are stronger and last longer.

However, the conversion theory had limitations. The theory did not explain why minority-induced delayed change often did not happen. The contemplation mechanism did not explain the immediate change in attitude in related issues. If contemplation takes time as Moscovici theorized, how does related change occur immediately? Lastly, his theory omitted the psychological process that leads to the delayed focal change from the immediate related change.

Although theories such as the dual-role model (De Vries et al., 1996), self-categorization theory (Abrams and Hogg, 1990), and the source-context elaboration model (Martin and Hewstone, 2008) have been developed to explain indirect minority influence, they only give

partial explanations. The dual-role model and the source-context elaboration model could not explain how a minority can cause delayed focal change or how immediate related change causes delayed focal change. Self-categorization theory focused primarily on the ingroup vs. outgroup source of minority influence while the rest of the process was ignored. The full range of indirect minority influence was finally explained by the leniency contract theory (Crano, 2010).

Figure E.1. The psychological and social mechanisms of indirect minority influence



Individuals with different views are connected to one another in a social network. Some can be majority in their local ingroup and others minority. Beliefs on various issues are connected to one other in a belief network. A focal belief (B_F) is the belief on a focal issue that is discussed in the minority's message. A related belief (B_R) is the belief on an issue that is related to the focal issue in the belief network (e.g., B_F = euthanasia, B_R = abortion rights).

According to the leniency contract theory (Crano, 2010), when minority belief holders are ingroup members and their messages are coherent and not threatening to the ingroup's identity, they may be influential due to a leniency contract. It is an implicit agreement that stipulates that the majority pay attention to a dissenting in-group minority opinion, thereby maintaining the viability and cohesion of the group as a whole (Crano, 2001). In turn, the minority implicitly accepts that a change in the focal belief is unlikely. However, even though focal attitude change is unlikely, the majority's *open-minded listening* to the minority position creates cognitive pressure that can cause the change of related attitudes within the same belief system, in the direction of the thrust of the minority's argument (Figure E.1). For example, when ingroup minorities voice a dissenting view on euthanasia (B_F: focal belief), some majority members may listen to these messages with an open mind, although they disagree, to maintain the cohesion of the ingroup. This open-minded elaboration creates cognitive pressure in their belief network system and spreads to related attitudes such as abortion rights (B_R: related belief), which results

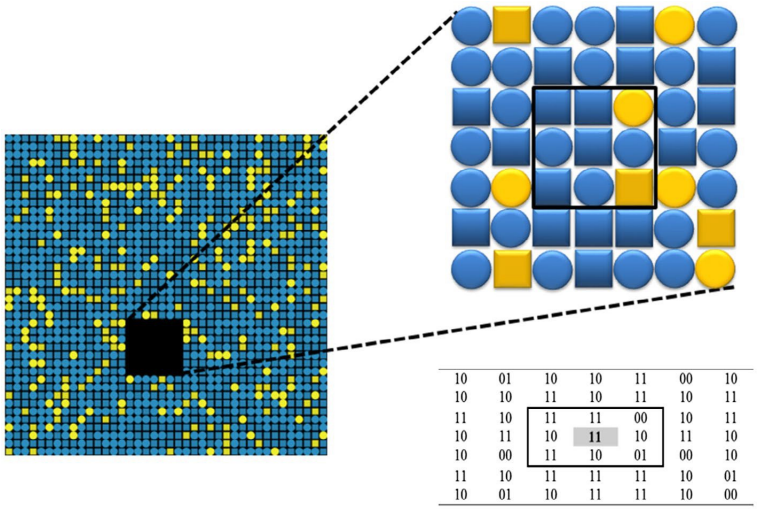
in related attitude change (Alvaro and Crano, 1996; Alvaro and Crano, 1997; Crano and Alvaro, 1998).

Leniency contract theory uses internal consistency as the psychological mechanism that leads to delayed focal change from immediate related change (Crano, 2012). As attitude change in related issues accumulate, delayed focal change can occur due to a tendency to maintain internal consistency within the belief system (Festinger, 1962; Gawronski and Strack, 2012). Because beliefs do not exist in isolation, but rather are structurally interrelated in the belief network system, beliefs that occupy the same belief community may all be affected when one element of the set is changed or pressured (Brandt, Sibley and Osborne, 2019; Crano and Lyrintzis, 2015; Dalege et al., 2018; Fink and Kaplowitz, 1993; McGuire, 1989; McGuire, 1990). The psychological mechanism underlying the causal link from related attitude change to delayed focal change has been empirically validated (Crano and Chen, 1998).

Social Change Driven by Indirect Minority Influence

Although the social psychological mechanisms of indirect minority influence have been thoroughly explained and empirically validated, research on indirect minority influence, like other social psychological research, assumed that if minority dissenters effectively influenced the majority's attitude toward the minority's position, they might possibly change group norms and an entire society (Prislin, 2022). The cross-level internal validity of this mechanism was first established by Jung and Bramson (2014) using a minimal cellular-automata style agent-based model (Figure E.2) (Jung and Bramson, 2014).

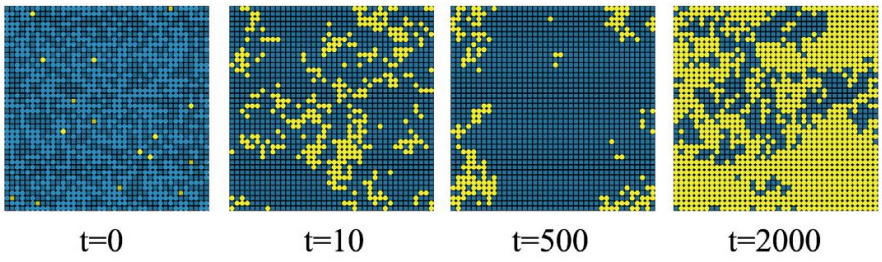
Figure E.2. Visualization of an artificial society of multiple agents with binary positions in two issues



The world is a 40 X 40 toroidal square lattice with 1600 agents. An agent's ingroup is defined by the eight agents in the agent's Moore neighborhood. This figure is drawn from Jung et al. (2018).

In this model, agents have binary positions on two issues, and in each iteration, each agent randomly selects one member in its local ingroup (i.e., Moore neighborhood) and communicates on an issue that is randomly chosen. If the self agent's focal attitude agrees with the ingroup agent, social influence is not initiated. However, if their focal attitudes disagree, disagreement with the ingroup agent draws attention and evokes inner conflict, motivating the self agent to resolve it. If the focal attitude of the ingroup agent is held by the ingroup majority, the self agent conforms to the source and changes its focal attitude (i.e., direct majority influence). Conversely, if the focal attitude of the ingroup agent is held by the ingroup minority, the agent examines whether the ingroup agent is consistent between the focal and related attitudes. Only if the ingroup minority agent has consistent attitudes, the self agent changes its related attitude in the direction of the ingroup agent's focal attitude (i.e., indirect minority influence). Once the social influence process has completed, the internal consistency process is initiated and all agents turn their attention to their own attitudes to re-balance their belief systems (i.e., internal consistency). As a result, two forms of cognitive readjustment to the imbalanced belief system occur. The newly changed attitude reverts to its previous position (persistence), or the newly changed attitude unbalances the belief system, which puts pressure on the linked focal attitude to be brought into accord with the newly changed attitude (delayed focal minority influence).

Figure E.3. Visualization of collective belief dynamics from one run that achieved social change



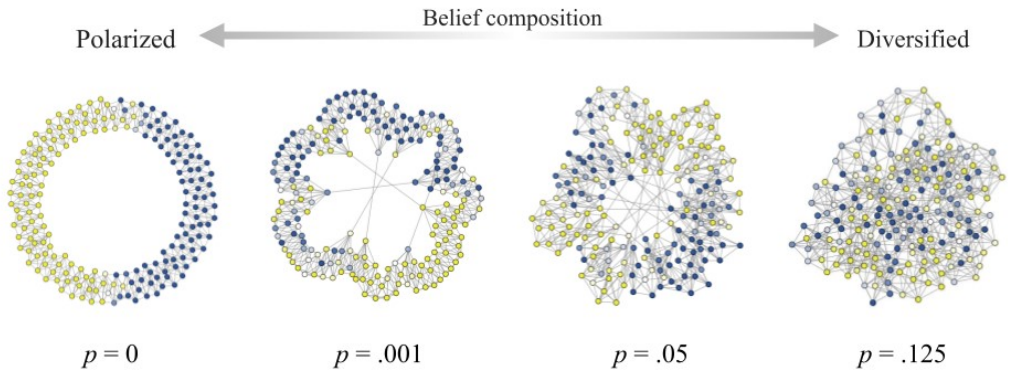
The combination of indirect minority influence and internal consistency generates social change facing direct majority influence. This figure is drawn from Jung et al. (2018).

This modeling work establishes cross-level internal validity by demonstrating that the three social psychological micro-mechanisms can drive the macro-pattern of social change. A series of simulations (Jung and Bramson, 2016; Jung, Bramson and Crano, 2018; Jung, Page and Miller, 2017) indicated that in the face of direct majority influence, indirect minority influence and internal consistency, when combined, can spread initial minority opinions to the society and change the norm (Figure E.3). Without internal consistency, indirect minority influence alone cannot counteract the force of direct majority influence reinforcing the status quo, and the society quickly homogenizes to the initial majority stance. This work also suggests a seemingly counter-intuitive yet logical process in which direct majority influence is actually a crucial driver

of social change. Without direct majority influence, indirect minority influence can only bring initial minority positions to an equal social footing but cannot spread further.

Recent social scientific discoveries have advanced our understanding of the processes of social change and persistence in two ways: (a) cultural tightness-looseness and (b) changes in communication networks.

Figure E.4. Belief compositions when social change occurs in small world networks with varying rewiring probabilities



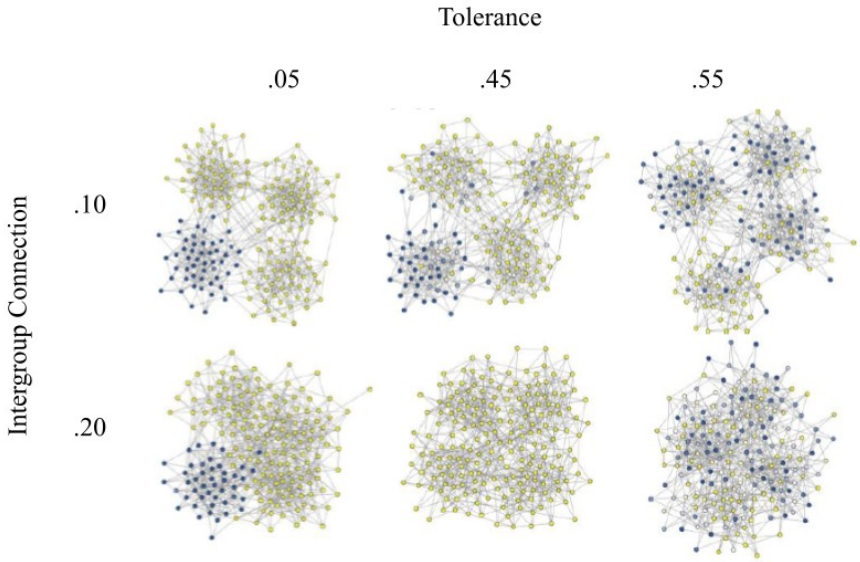
Higher p indicates more long ties that connect different parts of the network.

First, recent research in cultural psychology depicts tolerance toward minority dissent and conformity to majority norms as extreme ends of a continuum, namely cultural looseness and tightness (Gelfand et al., 2011). Tight cultures are characterized as having many strong norms and a low tolerance of deviant behaviors. Whereas loose cultures can be characterized as having weak social norms and a high tolerance of deviant behaviors. Tightness-looseness is determined by ecological and historical threats (e.g., high population density, resource scarcity, a history of territorial conflict, and disease and environmental threats), broad versus narrow socialization in societal institutions (e.g., autocracy, media regulations), the strength of everyday recurring situations, and micro-level psychological affordances (e.g., prevention self-guides, high regulatory strength, need for structure). This framework contrasts with the previous social psychological understanding that sees conformity to majority norms and tolerance to minority dissent as two separate axes (Crano, 2001).

Second, recent research in sociology has established that the topology of social communication networks influences the way that beliefs spread in society (Centola and Macy, 2007). It has been discovered that traditional communication networks (e.g. mail, phone) have small world characteristics (Eagle, Macy and Claxton, 2010; Milgram, 1967; Watts, 1998) whereas more contemporary social media communication networks (Smith et al., 2014) are

characterized by community structures like echo-chambers (Girvan and Newman, 2002) and preferential attachment toward opinion leaders (Barabási and Albert, 1999).

Figure E.5. Belief compositions when social change occurs in community structure networks with varying tolerance thresholds and intergroup connections

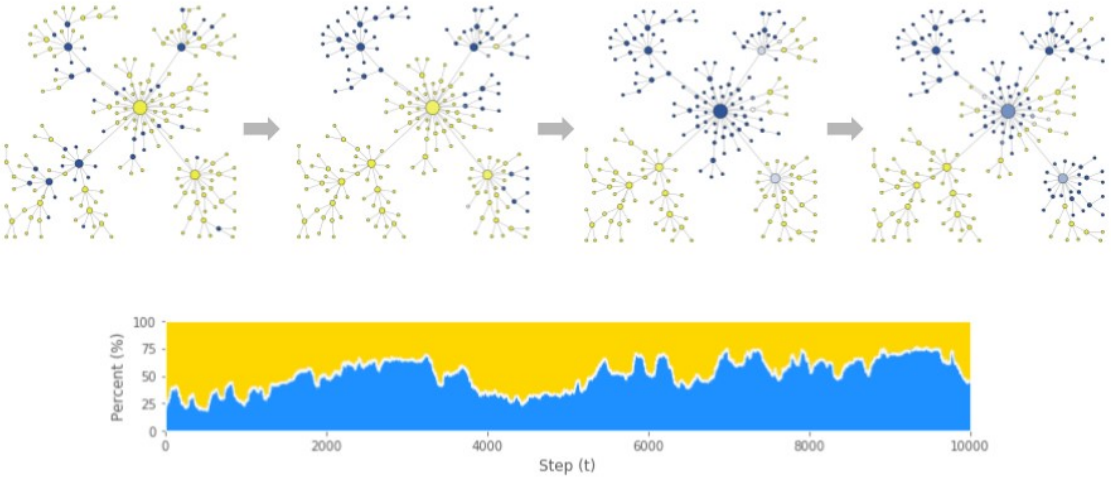


Tolerance specifies the probability that an agent gets influenced by an ingroup minority dissent. Intergroup connection specifies the percentage of edges that connect between groups.

To address these two discoveries, Jung et al. (2021) developed an agent-based model that included the social psychological mechanisms as well as two additional features to address the two new discoveries discussed above: (a) a tolerance threshold was parameterized to capture cultural tightness-looseness as a continuum (instead of two independent parameters in Jung et al. (2018); (b) various network structures were included to test their effects on the pattern of norm change (Jung, Bramson and Crano, 2018; Jung et al., 2021). This work revealed several striking findings, a few of which are described below.

First, distinct tipping points for the tolerance threshold were observed. This indicated that if the society didn't reach a tipping point in its social network structure, social change would not occur and hegemonic norms would persist. However, if the society reached a tipping point with the level of tolerance to minority's dissenting voice and tolerance to norm deviant behaviors, initial minority beliefs would spread to the society and change norms with regard to both related and focal issues.

Figure E.6. Belief dynamics and social change patterns in a preferential attachment network with hubs



In the tolerant society, minority influence generates gradual social change globally, however, network hubs drive rapid changes locally.

Second, different patterns of social change were observed in different communication network types. In small world networks representing traditional communication media, more connections between people from different groups drove diversity of opinions whereas fewer connections produced polarization and opinion segregation (Figure E.4).

In networks with clustered community structure, the effect of intergroup connection on norm change was conditional to societal tolerance toward norm deviant behaviors (Figure E.5). When the society is tolerant enough, social change will occur and intergroup connection doesn't affect the likelihood of social change. However, when the society has not reached the tipping point of tolerance, community structure functions as a barrier that prevents the hegemonic norm from spreading in the minority community. The problem occurs when societal tolerance increased but have not reached the tipping point. In the society with a suboptimal tolerance state, more connections between different norm groups let the hegemonic norm spread to a minority clique and homogenize the society.

In the networks characterized by preferential attachment to hubs (e.g., opinion leaders, popular political figures, influencers), indirect minority influence with associative psychological mechanisms generates gradual social change patterns (Figure E.6). However, hubs drive rapid changes locally because their followers rapidly change their beliefs as opinion leaders endorse a particular position. This indicates that although a society has been steadily changing or has changed toward a new normative state, a rapid return to the previous norm state can be observed if hubs endorse the previous norm.

Third, when social change happens, multiple issues change together and emerge a Zeitgeist or a new cultural era. It is never the case that one specific issue achieves a change and the rest of issues do not.

Considerations for Gender Norms in South Korea

The change and persistence of gender norms and attitudes in South Korea can be understood in light of the psychological and social mechanisms discussed above.

Societal Tolerance

South Korea has a long history of Confucianism, which upholds patriarchy along with other hierarchical ideologies. During the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1897), women were oppressed and discriminated against through the Confucian gender ideology that women are innately inferior to men and must therefore be subordinate to men in all aspects of life. This gender belief continued being reinforced by the family head system imposed by the colonial Japanese government and military dictatorship in South Korea. This Confucian gender belief is not at all unique to South Korean society. Many Asian countries that have adopted Confucianism as a fundamental ideology have deeply embedded hierarchical gender attitudes in all aspects of their societies.

Under authoritarian regimes, people used these shared cultural norms to guide their behaviors and avoid punishment in various interpersonal relations and social interactions. In other words, individuals with gender equality beliefs may still choose more socially accepting and norm conforming practices, which in turn further influences others in their perception of gender norms. And, individuals with hierarchical gender beliefs behave in accordance with their beliefs without questioning because such beliefs are assured by the social consensus (Jung, Bramson and Crano, 2018). In this way, gender norms remained persistent. Furthermore, the Confucian culture of neighboring countries in Asia have reinforced one another keeping them from potential cultural changes (Axelrod, 1997).

For the last several decades, South Korea has been becoming gradually more democratic. Economic development and institutional reforms encouraged the acceptance of democratic values such as equality, mutual respect, justice, tolerance, diversity, autonomy, and so on. People have become increasingly exposed to democratic culture and ideologies from important political allies such as the United States as communication and transportation technology have advanced. At the same time, social norms are becoming weaker across the globe (Jackson et al., 2019; Varnum, 2019). Therefore, decreased expectation of punishment for gender norm deviation reduced the conformity force, and people could speak their mind with reduced fear of public penalty.

As a result, gender equality beliefs and practices have become increasingly visible, which in turn has given people with hierarchical gender beliefs greater opportunities to be exposed to gender equality beliefs. Some of them may listen to reasons and arguments for gender equality beliefs with an open mind because the minorities are from their ingroup or close social circle.

This open-minded elaboration may create psychological discomfort and cognitive pressure, which can cause attitude change in related issues, including other hierarchical Confucian ideologies in terms of age, socio-economic, or educational status. If belief changes have accumulated in related issues, focal change in gender beliefs may occur via the psychological tendency to maintain consistency among similar attitudes. This means that societal members' beliefs in various issues change together as the society becomes more democratic and tolerant to minority dissent.

A Network System of Interconnected Beliefs

Social change in related issues that go hand in hand has been observed in the history of social movements and transformation. For example, two early nineteenth-century social movements strove to abolish slavery and provide equal rights for women. The abolitionist movement was an organized effort to end the practice of slavery in the United States that emerged in 1830 and concluded with the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments in 1865-1870. The women's rights movement was founded in 1848 with the goal of securing women's rights in various domains of life including voting rights, property rights, educational and occupational rights and so on. The women's rights movement also produce legislative changes including the Nineteenth amendment that granted women the right to vote. Another, more recent example is the ecofeminism movement in the 1970s and 80s. The foundational philosophy of this movement emphasized the ways both nature and women are unfairly treated by patriarchal norms in the society.

As illustrated in Figure E.1, beliefs and attitudes in multiple issues are interconnected and influence one another. How certain beliefs become associated with some beliefs but not others can be an arbitrary process that emerges from homophily and influence (DellaPosta, Shi and Macy, 2015) but in important social and moral issues, beliefs often come to be associated with one another when they share similarities in basic values (Schwartz, 1992) or are prescribed by social identities (Brandt, Sibley and Osborne, 2019; Turner et al., 1987).

This framing provides insight into why different democratic practices were accepted or resisted in South Korea. The national health insurance service and public education system were established without much resistance, maybe because these systems are consistent with Confucian communitarianism. However, the issues of gender equality, LGBTQ rights, and immigration faced strong resistance because they went against Confucian hierarchical ideologies.

Communication Networks

The findings of the agent-based modeling with varying communication networks provide further insights in understanding some of the complex and puzzling problems in South Korea's gender inequality issue.

We assume that South Korean society had the characteristics of a small world network until the advent of social media changed the structure of communications. People interacted in person

with their social neighborhood, by postal service, or by phone call. These forms of communication tend to generate networks with small world characteristics such that most social ties form locally but there are occasional long ties that connect different parts of the society. As South Korean society became more democratic and tolerant to gender equality practices, gender equality beliefs would be expected to spread gradually to the society. Because we do not have exact network measures quantifying the South Korean communication network at that time, we cannot say whether societal tolerance and minority influence would have led to polarization or diversification (Figure E.4).

As various social media emerged such as Facebook, Twitter, and internet forums, people selected communication partners via social media. This communication technology changed the structure of social and communication networks characterized by community structures like echo-chambers and hubs (opinion leaders). This further influenced how information travels and beliefs spread in the society. Ilbe (aka Daily Best), a South Korean Internet forum created in 2010, has an alt-right, anti-feminist, anti-immigrant, and anti-LGBT stance (Halegoua and Moon, 2021). Those who have hierarchical gender beliefs may find this forum to be a place to express their beliefs in a form of hate speech (Halegoua & Moon, 2021) which further reinforces such beliefs (Oettingen et al., 2022). Such opinion cliques like Ilbe advocating hierarchical gender beliefs may have contributed to the persistence of gender inequality in the society as shown in Figure E.5.

Also, political figures have disproportional influence on their supporters. For example, during the presidential campaign in 2021-2022, then leading conservative main opposition party presidential contender Yoon Seok-youl stirred the debate over the existence of the ministry of gender equality and family (Mobrand, 2022). On October 21, 2021, while announcing his campaign pledges targeted at young voters, Yoon said, “The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family failed to properly perform its role to accomplish gender equality, but rather disappointed the public by treating men as potential criminals” (Bahk, 2021). Opinion leaders legitimizing hierarchical gender beliefs can drive sharp regression toward hierarchical gender beliefs among their followers as shown in Figure E.6. To clarify this, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family may consider implementing the gender equality survey more frequently than the 5-year interval which corresponds to the contentious presidential campaign cycle.

Former Majority’s Reactions Facing Social Change

Social psychological work described in the previous section has provided several insights into the change and persistence of gender norms in South Korea. This work explicates the psychological and social mechanisms by which gender equality beliefs spread in society and change norms as the society becomes more democratic and tolerant to gender norm deviant practices (Jung and Bramson, 2016; Jung, Bramson and Crano, 2018).

This work also explains how gender inequality persists while people generally believe in gender equality. We see how network cliques and hubs advocating hierarchical gender beliefs

can reinforce gender inequality beliefs and even cause rapid localized return to gender inequality in the local community (Jung et al., 2021). If the population of a particular generation takes part in more communications in such network cliques or follows hubs advocating gender inequality beliefs, we might expect to see such persistence in traditional norms.

These seem to provide insight into the two questions posed at the beginning of this paper. However, they do not explain the gender gap in perceptions of gender equality among the rising generation of people in their 20s who at the same time are more likely to hold equal gender roles beliefs than are people from older generations. To understand this, the psychology of a former majority (a new minority) in the face of social change is described.

Prislin and Christensen (2005b) established the gain-loss asymmetry model of change in minority and majority positions to explain why former majority and minority members respond differently in the face of successful minority influence (Prislin and Christensen, 2005b). According to the model, the significant comparative advantages of the majority position over the minority position lead to the former being favored over the latter. As a result, moves away from the favored majority position are experienced as losses, while moves away from the minority position are therefore experienced as gains. Because gains are experienced less intensely than the comparable losses (Kahneman and Tversky, 2013), positive reactions elicited by shifts away from the minority position are weaker than negative reactions elicited by shifts away from the majority positions.

The group contexts that this model was developed to explain are the ones where people can choose their group membership. The model further explains that in the face of social change in which minorities may become majorities and vice versa, the new majority (former minority) may react only mildly positively, and the new minority (former majority) may react intensely negatively toward the group with which they swapped the status. While former majority (new minority) members weaken their group identification and may want to leave the group (Sani, 2008), former minority (new majority) members don't strengthen their group identification as much. As a result, the viability and coherence of the group can be weakened in the immediate aftermath of social change (Prislin and Christensen, 2005a). However, if the newly obtained majority status within the organization stabilizes, the first lukewarm emotions of the victorious minority should become more positive with time (Prislin, 2022).

Furthermore, when the relationship between majority and minority entails harm to the other group and the majority is threatened by being accused of causing unjust harm, some majority members may restore their positive moral status via the strategy of competitive victimhood (Sullivan et al., 2012). Such majority members claim that they have suffered as much or more than the harmed minority.

The gain-loss asymmetry model and competitive victimhood provide a social psychological framework to understand gender conflict in South Korea especially among the rising generation. Different groups of people may experience different normative positions with respect to gender equality beliefs to different degrees depending on their ingroup and social circle. These are

defined by the geographical region where they live, their gender and age group, which political party they support, their occupation and workplace, and so on. The rising generation, generally holding gender equality beliefs, may experience the social change of gender equality beliefs more strongly than older generations.

Some men in the rising generation may perceive changes toward a gender equal society as losses. In the context of the nation, membership change is a less feasible reaction (Prislin & Christensen, 2005a). Thus, they may rather try to revert these changes by supporting political leaders who advocate and represent their stance. Or they may find online communities in which they can be understood and feel safe to express their experiences.

We note that the rising generation is more likely to have gender equality beliefs and generally endorse democratic values and morality more than older generations. Thus, they may experience more threat to their moral identity from accusations that men historically did harm to women. This may explain why 24% of men in their 20s indicated that the society treats men unequally. This response pattern is consistent with Sullivan et al. (2012)'s finding that male participants were more likely to claim that men are discriminated against compared to women after their group was accused of harming women.

Concluding Remarks

This paper described the social psychological mechanisms of change and persistence in social norms to provide insights into two questions: How does gender inequality persist in South Korea although people generally believe in gender equality? And why does the rising generation of people in their 20s exhibit the greatest gender gap in the perception of society's unequal treatment of men and women, while at the same time holding less traditional gender role beliefs than older generations?

First, the framework of indirect minority influence on social change explicated the psychological and social mechanisms by which gender equality beliefs spread in society and change norms as the society becomes more democratic and tolerant to gender norm deviant practices (Jung and Bramson, 2014; Jung, Bramson and Crano, 2018). This analysis pointed to two potentially useful future research possibilities to further our understanding of gender norms in South Korea. One possibility is to examine the perception of social pressure and tolerance toward gender norm deviants. By doing so, we can quantify the extent to which norm persistence can be attributed to the social component of collective belief dynamics. This will indicate whether the society has reached a sufficient level of tolerance toward norm deviants or needs further up-regulating via policies and initiatives. The other possibility is to study how gender-related beliefs are associated with other related beliefs in various social, political, and moral issues using network modeling and simulation (Borsboom et al., 2021). By doing so, researchers may be able to identify issues that are closely linked to gender attitudes and have the potential to promote or inhibit belief change on various gender issues through indirect influence.

Second, interdisciplinary work that combines social psychological mechanisms with recent developments in cultural psychology and sociology explained why gender inequality persists while people generally believe in gender equality (Jung et al., 2021). This research indicated that network cliques and hubs advocating hierarchical gender beliefs can reinforce gender inequality beliefs and even cause rapid localized return to gender inequality in the local community. This implies that policy interventions may need to focus on the general trend of increasing gender equality beliefs and continue to implement progressive gender equality policies to improve gender equality in family and workplace domains, rather than focusing on changing beliefs and norms among specific age and gender groups. Furthermore, internet platform policies might be strengthened to manage hate speech and misinformation on online forums like Ilbe (Velasquez et al., 2021). One of the most effective ways to shift behaviors on a network is to target hubs such as social media influencers and opinion leaders (Alshamsi, Pinheiro and Hidalgo, 2017).

Third, the gain-loss asymmetry and competitive victimhood models provide a social psychological framework to understand gender conflict in South Korea especially among the rising generation. This work provides insights into the causes of psychological reactions of the young male population. Interventions that highlight common fates and future well-being among both genders can be useful, according to the empirical evidence on reducing competitive victimhood (Young and Sullivan, 2016).

This paper aims to contribute to a collective effort among academic and policy researchers from various disciplines to understand the forces that make changes in gender equality norms so difficult. This will undoubtedly include mechanisms that have been overlooked in some fields but are well documented in others. Establishing this kind of interdisciplinary common understanding will help to define future research possibilities for effective policy interventions.

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K-dramas as a Lens to Understanding Gender Issues in Contemporary South Korea

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Prologue: Rise of Korean dramas

The popularity of the action-thriller *Squid Game* (2021) reinforced South Korea as a global drama powerhouse as audiences tuned into the nine-episode Netflix series in which 456 down-and-out contestants play children's games in a life-or-death battle, vying for 45.6 billion won (approximately $35 million US at the time) to go to the sole survivor. Netflix estimates that viewers had clocked in 1.65 billion viewing hours in the first 28 days of release, making it the most popular Netflix series to date at the time (Spangler, 2021). Viewers were fascinated by the macabre plot, desperation of the characters, and stunning visuality of the scenes featuring vividly colorful sets and costumes. *Squid Game* fever quickly took hold, with people reenacting games from the series, eagerly trying the candy known as *dalgona*, depleting stores of Adidas tracksuits, dressing up as guards for Halloween, and clamoring for a second season. Netflix responded with promises of a second season as well as a non-lethal reality show called *Squid Game: Challenge* where contestants will compete for a more modest $4.56 million. Ann Babe and others have criticized the series for its misogynistic portrayal of women and normalizing their sacrifices, calling for Season 2 to depict women with more sensitivity and complexity (Babe, 2021). On the other hand, Rebecca Johnson argued that most of the games in *Squid Game* highlight the need for strategy over physical strength and do not favor male contestants (Johnson, 2021). For better or for worse, fans and critics were drawn to at least one female character, Kang Sae-byeok, portrayed by international runway model HoYeon Jung in her breakout role. Jung was nominated for numerous awards in Korea and elsewhere, and won a Screen Actors Guild award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Dramatic Series, a first for a non-English language show.[1]

Although *Squid Game* garnered much attention in 2021, audiences worldwide had already been seeking escape in recent years, eagerly watching Korean dramas in a variety of genres, such as melodrama (*Crash Landing On You* [2019-2020]), fantasy (*Kingdom* seasons 1 and 2 [2019 and 2022]), action (*Vincenzo* [2021]), historical (*Mr. Sunshine* [2018]), medical/legal (*Hospital Playlist* seasons 1 and 2 [2020 and 2021]), and romantic comedy (*Business Proposal* [2022]).[2] These labels, however, can be limiting, as Korean entertainment often crosses genres.

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[1] Lee Jung-jae, the male lead in *Squid Game*, also won a SAG award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Dramatic Series.

[2] Genres are very subjective but eight categories, according to Conan (2021) are: 1) romance and romantic comedy; 2) melodrama; 3) period drama; 4) thriller; 5) action; 6) youth drama; 7) medical/legal; 8) fantasy horror (which includes unique subgenre themes such as timeslip, body-swap, and ghostly romance) (Conan, 2021).

Additionally, Korean dramas (K-dramas) have been popular since the 2000s when audiences worldwide were drawn to *Dae Jang Geum* (*Jewel in the Palace* [2003]), a historical drama set in the sixteenth century featuring a strong female character who rises from being a palace kitchen servant to cook and then royal physician. The drama has been especially popular in Muslim countries with strict government censorship of television[3] because of the combination of the strong female lead and chaste scenes that conform to conservative social standards. Similarly, women audiences around the world have driven much of the demand for Korean dramas, as it is often geared toward female viewers.

Women and K-dramas

In Korea, women comprise the majority of drama viewership so K-dramas have often focused on female characters and storylines appealing to female viewers. A 2014 Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) study examining 2004 data found that 86.7% of females watched dramas, compared to 44.8% of males.[4] Joan MacDonald said that females comprise almost 90% of screenwriters, and later-evening and weekend dramas (which are more likely to depict changing gender norms than daytime dramas) pass or surpass the Bechdel test, which calculates the minutes of content when two female characters talk to each other about a topic other than men (MacDonald, 2019). K-dramas, however, are not just about showing handsome and sensitive men for the female gaze, and often feature strong, professional female characters. K-dramas may be both, depicting love triangles involving one strong woman and two very different men, with fans taking sides and hoping that their favored male character will be the one who ends up with the female lead. Additionally, workplace romances are very common and while they are often kept secret at first, they are an integral aspect of K-dramas with the heightened tension between characters who are romantically intertwined in and out of the office, often in hierarchical professional relationships. Increasingly, we have seen K-dramas where there is an office romance between a woman and her male subordinate.

Existing scholarship provides a starting point for our discussion of female viewers and characters in K-drama. Jiyeun Lee and Sung-Yeon Park examined 1,590 characters in the top 10 dramas annually between 2003 and 2012. They found that the women in their 20s were the largest age group of female characters in K-dramas, emphasizing their youth as well as lower financial, education, and occupational status relative to men, reinforcing the "Cinderella myth (Lee and Park, 2015)." This trope is still common in many dramas today but there are also many other plotlines with stronger female characters and often younger men.

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[3] *Jewel in the Palace* first aired in Iran in 2007, and opened the doors to many other Korean dramas and has also been said to have contributed to cyberfeminism among young Iranian women, even before the current 2022 protests surrounding the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody after she was arrested for violating hijab laws (Koo, 2020).

[4] The Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) published this in 2013 based on data from 2004, so current data is likely to be different (Korea Women's Development Institute, 2013).

Youna Kim pointed out in 2005 that South Korean women of different generations have understood and appropriated television differently, that women in their 50s tend to defend tradition, whereas women in their 40s seek emotional satisfaction, and women in their 20s embrace the new (Kim, 2012). Similarly, many younger female characters are not seeking a Prince Charming, but this is also not a new trend. In 2005, Jinhee Cho said that non-traditional family structures became commonplace with 1990s dramas which cast "strong, identifiable and resourceful women as central characters," breaking out of stereotypes of women as "passive housewives, sultry sex objects, and helpless female victims (Cho, 2004)." In today's dramas, female characters are not simply wives and mothers who make selfless sacrifices for their family, or ruthless women who will resort to anything to ensure success for themselves or their loved ones. There are many female leads who are doctors such as Jeon Mi-do as Chae Song-hwa in *Hospital Playlist* (2020) and *Hospital Playlist 2* (2022) women lawyers such as Park Eun-bin as Woo Young-woo in *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022).

Korean dramas also have pushed the boundaries into what had previously been avoided or taboo in mainstream dramas. We have seen a growing number of single mothers, such as Gong Hyo-jin as Dong-baek in *When the Camellia Blooms* (2019) and Song Ji-hyo as Noh Ae-jeong in *Was It Love?* (2020). We also see dramas trying to depict more diverse issues such as depression (*Our Blues* [2022], *It's Okay to Not Be Okay* [2020], and *My Liberation Notes* [2022]), Down's syndrome (*Our Blues* [2022]), and autism (*Good Doctor* [2013], also remade in the US], *It's Okay to Not Be Okay* [2020], *Move to Heaven* [2021], and *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* [2022]). There has been more LGBTQ+ representation with characters such as Ma Hyeon-yi (Lee Joo-young) in *Itaewon Class* (2020), Jung So-hyun (Kim Seo-hyung) in *Mine* (2021), Chae U-gi (Choi Min-ho) n *Yumi's Cells* (2021), Yoo Cho-hee (Hong Ji-hee) in *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021), Woo Gwang-nam (Kang Hyung-seok) in *Love in Contract* (2022), and Han Gang-Bae (Kwon Ji-Woo) in *The Empire* (2022). The diversity of characters and issues reflect changes in Korean society as previously taboo topics become more mainstream.

This essay focuses on *Extraordinary Attorney* Woo (written by Moon Ji-won, directed by Yoo In-sik, and aired on ENA within Korea and on Netflix outside of Korea, June 29-August 18, 2022) to see how women are depicted and what this says about women's roles in South Korea today. I argue that the emergence of more diverse female characters and previously underrepresented characters are due to a combination of factors ranging from studios trying to gauge new trends to maximize profits from domestic and global audiences, viewers who are seeking more diverse representation, as well as new takes on old tropes, and social concerns such as low rates of marriage and childbirth in South Korea.[5] We can also see how K-dramas can reflect anxiety about the declining birthrate, as expressed in subtle messages from governmental,

[5] In 2021, the female fertility rate in South Korea was 0.81 child per woman, marking the lowest among the 38 OECD member countries which recorded an average birthrate of 1.59 in 2020. In 2012, the fertility rate had been at 1.30 and declined to 0.87 in 2018 (Nam, 2021). The population replacement rate is considered to be around 2.1.

business, and societal actors to encourage women to have more children. But K-dramas also show women who want satisfying careers and while they may seek romance, they are not rushing into marriage and motherhood.

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Extraordinary Attorney Woo centers on Woo Young-woo (Park Eun-bin), a genius lawyer with autism who is fixated on whales. Raised by Woo Gwang-ho (Jeon Bae-soo), a single dad who refused to see her neurodivergence as a handicap, she graduated at the top of her Seoul National University School of Law (SNU Law) class and scored near-perfectly on the Korean bar exam, but was turned down for top legal jobs because of her autism. She ends up getting a one-year contract job at a prestigious law firm called Hanbada headed by Han Seon-yeong (Baek Ji-won). She becomes a lawyer who champions for underdogs and is able to win cases with her ability to see outside of the box. While this was not the first K-drama to feature a main character with autism, the popularity of the drama within Korea and abroad far exceeded expectations.

Through *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, we can gain anecdotal insight into some of the current social issues in South Korea and see how women are depicted as overcoming challenges through individual resilience. Most remarkably, we see Young-woo navigating changing relationships with her father, her newly-found birth mother, and her coworkers, including a developing romance with co-worker Lee Jun-ho (Kang Tae-oh), whose friends and family do not understand his attraction to the neurodivergent Young-woo. While Jun-ho's parents are both attorneys, Jun-ho was not quite lawyer material and works as a legal assistant at the firm, so Young-woo is his superior at work. Interestingly, Yoonhee Lee has pointed out that the show does not have villains as other K-dramas do, citing writer Moon Ji Won who said she and the other producers wanted to focus on the leading character and her ability overcome challenges rather than a villain (Lee, 2022c). Even Young-wo's nemesis at work ends up on her side, as Young-woo grows professionally and personally while breaking down social barriers about neurodiversity.

Although the show received much attention, it was also criticized for its unrealistic depiction of autism. Park Eun-bin said that rather than modeling her character on real people with autism, she focused on traits associated with autism spectrum in building what she called "a hymn to the misfits of the world." Park said in an interview that she avoided previous depictions of characters with autism, and says she instead studied "the diagnosis criteria of the autism spectrum (to build the character)." She said, "I did try to find the approach that would not hurt those with autism and their families. And the answer I found was that since there's a whole spectrum in diagnosis and characteristics, I should focus on portraying Woo's genuine narrative, like how she faces the world and grows from it." Park added that "life is weird and quirky… valuable and beautiful" for everyone, and that is message for all of us (Lee, 2022a). As Park's portrayal elicited both praise and criticism, Jin Yu Young states in the New York Times that autism and autism service centers have all received more attention due to the show (Young, 2022). This show clearly elicited

conversation about autism, which is an important first step for a country where mental health and neurodivergence have been taboo topics.

Female Characters in Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Woo Young-woo, the titular and palindromic female lead of the series, is portrayed as a socially awkward genius who did not speak until she was five years old when she suddenly started reciting legal codes. And despite an IQ of 164, she is unable to read people's facial expressions and decipher subtle cues in people's conversations and actions. Young-woo will only eat kimbap (seaweed-wrapped rolls of rice, vegetables, and other ingredients) because she can see everything in the rolls and there are no surprises. Young-woo is also fascinated with whales, knows countless facts about whales, and is eager to talk about whales even if the other person has no interest in them. She wears headphones to block out external noise stimuli and has difficulty in making spatial transitions such as entering a room or going through revolving doors.

To better fit into a neurotypical society, Young-woo receives constant coaching from her father and her best friend, Dong Geurami (Joo Hyun-young) about how to behave in all sorts of professional and social situations. The elder Woo is depicted as a dedicated man who sacrificed his own legal career in order to become a single dad, valorizing him at a critical moment in South Korea's birthrate that is below replenishment levels.[6] Meanwhile, Dong Geurami (whose name sounds like the Korean word for "circle") is depicted with more depth. Young-woo and Geurami became best friends in high school because both were bullied, and share a special greeting routine that became a social media trend with celebrities and fans alike posting their version of the greeting.[7] Young-woo's friend Choi Su-yeon (Ha Yoon-kyung) is a law school classmate and colleague whose life has been picture-perfect, with a father who is a judge and an impressive resume of her own. Su-yeon is a good friend and sticks up for Young-woo and never gets jealous of her, the way their male colleague Kwon Min-woo (Joo Jong-hyuk) does. Min-woo is infuriated that Young-woo has gotten preferential treatment in getting a one-year contract job due to her father's school ties with the firm's managing partner. Su-yeon, however, points out that it was discriminatory for someone with Young-woo's qualifications to *not* have gotten a job because of her autism.

The two managing partners in the series, Han Seon-young (Baek Ji-won) of Hanbada and Tae Soo-mi (Jung Han-bit) of Taesan represent rival law firms. Both women studied law at Seoul National University and came to lead the law firms founded by their respective fathers, so they

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[6] In looking at reality shows such as *Dad! Where Are We Going?* (2013-2015) and *The Return of Superman (*2013-), Grace Jung argues that shows valorizing fatherhood "are biopolitical in their design to encourage heteronormative coupling and reproduction among women more so than promote household egalitarianism (Jung, 2020)." We can apply this to the single-parent trope and see how parenthood is being promoted as a means of mitigating the birthrate decline.

[7] The greeting has Dong Geurami chanting, "Woo to the Young to the Woo," and Young-woo responding, "Dong to the Geu to the Rami" with accompanying gestures and ending in a dab.

may not be self-made, but they have proven themselves in their leadership roles.[8] Taesan is the more prestigious law firm, so Han is determined to win against her rival at any cost. As the plot develops, we see Tae nominated to become Minister of Justice and Han ruthlessly plans to expose Tae's deep secret that she is Young-woo's birth mother. Tae is determined to hide Young-woo at any cost, even if it means teaming up with Kwon Min-woo and sending Young-woo and her father to Boston because she does not want anything to stand in the way of her nomination. The plot becomes even more complicated by Tae's son, Choi Sang-hyeon (Young-woo's half-brother), a high school student who has hacked a major online shopping website at the behest of his mentor, causing a huge financial and legal uproar. In the end, Tae accepts responsibility for her son's crime and withdraws her name from the nomination.

Legal cases in Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Through the sixteen episodes, Young-woo wins cases with her photographic memory and fresh perspective even though she is a novice attorney, going head-to-head against more experienced lawyers such as Tae Soo-mi. We also see female characters who come across as strong and determined even when they are targets of discrimination. The various cases are noteworthy, including one involving an elderly woman who hit her husband (who has dementia) on the head with an iron (episode 1, "Extraordinary Attorney Woo"), but when the husband dies, she is accused of murder. This episode also explains Young-woo's childhood, as the defendant and her husband were landlords and neighbors of Young-woo and her father many years ago when the male landlord was already displaying signs of dementia and paranoia, and it was the woman who had first said that the five-year-old Young-woo could become a lawyer.

In the next episode, the case involves a bride whose wedding with a *jaebeol* (conglomerate) scion is ruined when her dress falls off and exposes a Buddhist tattoo (episode 2, "The Wedding Dress That Slipped Off"). But we find out that the bride's true secret is not that she is Buddhist, but that she is queer and in love with someone else whom she ends up choosing. In episode 3 ("This is Pengsoo"), a grown man with autism is accused of killing his brother when he was actually trying to save him from a suicide attempt (episode 3, "This is Pengsoo") but his parents would rather see him found culpable than to admit that their seemingly perfect late son had battled depression. In this episode, we also see Young-woo asking her father how to connect with the client whose autism is more severe than hers, and we see flashbacks to how difficult it was for the elder Woo to connect with his daughter.

Next, we meet Dong Geurami's father, who agrees to share his inheritance with his brothers but ends up with all of the debt and none of the assets (episode 4, "The Strife of the Three Brothers"). In episode 5, "Wild Card vs. Tactician," two companies that produce ATM cards are engaged in a copyright battle, and Young-woo gets tips from Geurami on how to tell when

[8] In reality, a recent report of 2020 data shows that women only comprise of 24% of the 831,096 employees at the top 150 companies, and also earn 38% less than males on the average (Lee, 2022b).

someone is lying. In another episode, Young-woo and Seon-young represent an imprisoned North Korean refugee mother who is trying to get her daughter back from an orphanage (episode 6, "If I Were a Whale"). We see how North Korean refugees are often victimized in South Korea, and the client is depicted not as a lawbreaker, but as a devoted mother who is entirely focused on her young daughter.

Young-woo also represents a town fighting to keep a highway from going through their town (episodes 7 and 8, "A Tale about Sodeok-dong I and II"), and an idealistic man who wants young kids to have a childhood free of rigorous academic expectations (episode 9, "The Pied Piper"). Young-woo also takes on a male client who is accused of sexual assault for having a relationship with a young woman with a developmental disability (episode 10, "Holding Hands Can Wait"), which is based on an actual case. This episode coincides with Young-woo's budding romance with Jun-ho and how others question Jun-ho's intent for dating Young-woo. Instead of seeing that Jun-ho genuinely admires Young-woo, they think he is taking pity on her. Later in season 1, the two break up for a while before getting back together.

Episode 11, "Mr. Salt, Ms. Pepper, and Attorney Soy Sauce" feature two men who sue their friend (all of whom engage in illegal gambling) for their share of a winning lottery ticket. We see, however, that the plaintiff who pretends to be a devoted husband is in reality a terrible person, and despite winning the case, has a tragic but perhaps deserved ending.

In episode 12, "Yangtze River Dolphins That Still Exist," a life insurance company offers female employees, whose husbands work also work for the company, the option to quit or else their husbands will be laid off without compensation. Two women refuse to quit and file a gender discrimination lawsuit against the company, and Young-woo must defend the corporate client. Min-woo sends confidential information to the plaintiff's attorney in the hopes of pinning it on Young-woo, but the judge nonetheless rules for the defendant. In episodes 13 and 14, "The Blue Night of Jeju I and II," the four Hanbada attorneys and Geurami and her boss go to Jeju Island together to work on a case. They also go in search of a famed noodle restaurant that Myeong-seok, her supervisor, recalls fondly from his honeymoon with his now ex-wife.

In the final two episodes, "Saying and Doing Things Not Asked" and "Though Unusual and Peculiar," a large online shopping website is hacked and faces an unprecedented fine for the breach of private data. It turns out that one cofounder had used Tae Soo-mi's teenage son, Choi Sang-hyeon (who is Young-woo's half-brother), to instigate the hacking to show the company's vulnerability, but results in the CEO's attempted suicide. Sang-hyeon tells his mother that he wants to come clean, but she tells him to stay quiet. We find that the two half-siblings share some commonalities and seem comfortable with each other, and he confesses to her. In the end, Han Seon-yeong does not disclose Young-woo to be Tae Soo-mi's daughter, but Tae withdraws her nomination over Sang-hyeon's hacking incident. We see that while everyone has flaws, each is capable of redemption.

In all these cases, we see Woo Young-woo win lawsuits over more experienced attorneys because of her photographic memory, calling up details that other cannot and because she can

make connections and see unique solutions because of her autism. We also see Young-woo develop closer relationships with people whom she cares about, while also setting boundaries with her birth mother. Ultimately, viewers who were initially skeptical about the series came to embrace Young-woo and the other characters to make the show a huge success. The final episode aired on August 18 and had a 17.5% national viewer share in South Korea (KPopMap.com, 2022). Although the show aired over eight weeks, Netflix viewers clocked in 289 million hours in its first 28 days and 341.5 million hours by the end of its 8-week run (Andreeva, 2022). The success of this series assures a second season, although it will have to wait until the male lead, Kang Tae-oh, completes his military service in early 2024.

Epilogue

Looking at the larger picture of gender issues in South Korea, we see that K-dramas such as *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* depict some realistic issues concerning gender disparity and discrimination but also selectively choose what to portray. Nonetheless they show a society where more women can be in leadership positions and seek self-fulfillment on their own terms, and hopefully inspire young people to make that their reality. And while *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* is not the first show to feature a neurodivergent lead character, it is part of a trend to showcase diverse and underrepresented characters, especially female ones. This is because females make up the majority of drama-watchers in Korea and also feature prominently as characters and screenwriters. And with the tremendous success of Korean dramas abroad, producers have also been trying to present diverse characters and storylines that are both uniquely Korean and universally appealing. Additionally, we see Korean sociopolitical anxieties about declining birthrates depicted through the valorization of single parents, including single fathers.

Presuming that there is a second season of *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, it will be interesting to see how Young-woo's character further develops professionally and personally, especially in her relationship with Jun-ho. I am eager to see what kinds of cases Young-woo will take on in the next season and hope she represents more marginalized characters, including guest workers, sexual minorities (the term for LGBTQ+ in South Korea), elderly living in poverty, victims of domestic violence, and others who are still subject to numerous societal barriers. And perhaps future research will show the relationship between media and society and illuminate how fiction and reality influence each other to continuously construct a more inclusive society, especially when it comes to gender and intersectionality.

*Advisory: This essay contains spoilers about the dramas discussed.

*Note on names: Korean names are generally given surname first, so for Woo Young-woo, Woo is her surname and Young-woo is her given name. And while McCune-Reischauer and

Revised Romanization are the two main standards for Romanizing Korean, this paper also uses idiosyncratic Romanization of names following each show or individual actor's usage.

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Persistent gender inequality at work and women's fertility decision in the context of rising inequality in Korea

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Abstract

Korea stands out as the world's lowest-low fertility country. This study examines a novel yet less attended fertility trend in Korea, the recent weakening of differential fertility. It challenges previous demographic theories presuming that the negative income-fertility relationship will become strengthened in the context of rising inequality. To understand this puzzle, we need to better understand individual-level fertility decision-making. Using the 2018 Korean General Social Survey-linked semi-structured interview data(N=104), this study analyzes how Koreans in their 20s and 30s make decisions on fertility and how they justify their decisions. Preliminary analysis reveals that narratives of fertility are surprisingly homogenous and converge to a dominant narrative setting a “fertility bar” much higher than the marriage bar. There is a subtle variation across class and gender, revealing women’s dilemmas around work and babies and their diverged manifestation across the class. In the context of the long workhour culture and strong ideal worker norm prevalent in all workplaces in Korea, career professional women are afraid of career disruption by childbearing while unskilled women are afraid of being forced to work and second-shift for childrearing. This finding provides a clue to understanding not only the persistent lowest-low fertility in South Korea but also the weakening of differential fertility. It also poses that the gender-egalitarianism prediction on the fertility U-curve might not be realized soon in the context of rising inequality and polarization of women’s labor market in Korea. In the presence of a widespread high fertility bar, maintaining dual earnings becomes ever more important to secure the economic stability of the family, a necessary condition for childbearing decisions. However, the Korean corporate work environment is still incompatible with workers with family responsibilities affect negatively women’s childbearing intention, both middle-class career-oriented professionals and working-class forced-earners. Changing Korean workplace culture so as not to restrict women’s choice between work and baby can have a positive impact on women’s fertility decisions in all socioeconomic positions.

I. A novel trend of fertility in Korea: weakening differential fertility

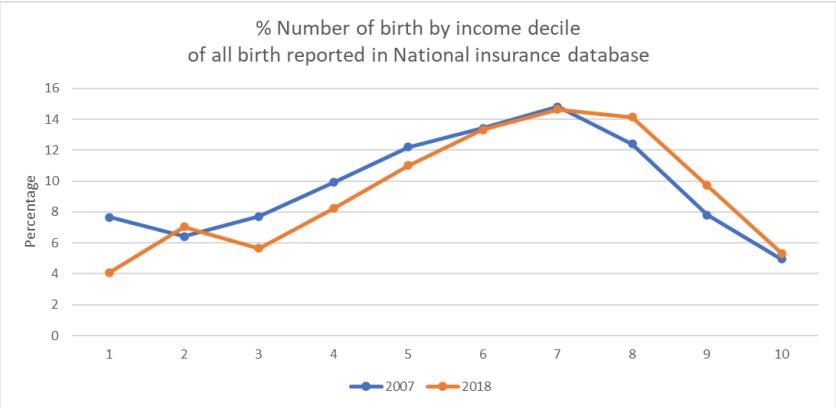
Korea stands out as the world's lowest fertility rate country, which marked an unprecedented total fertility rate (TFR) of 0.81, in 2021. The degree of decline in Korea's fertility rate is noteworthy, however, there is another novel trend that has been less noticed, obscured by the dramatic downfall of the TFR, a weakening of differential fertility rates among socioeconomic groups.

For a long, demographic theories emphasize that demographic behaviors are heterogeneous across the socioeconomic class. During the 20th century, the differential fertility across education groups had been distinctive and widely observed in most industrial countries. In fact, the negative education-fertility relationship had been the foremost pivotal pattern that the first generation of fertility choice models tried to explain (Doepke et al., 2022). However, there has been a significant change in that trend and the negative gradient of fertility by educational attainment has been weakened in some Western countries (Adsera, 2017; Bailey, Guldi and Hershbein, 2013; Kravdal and Rindfuss, 2008; Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013).

In Korea, a few empirical research started to report the decline of fertility differentials across socio-economic groups. A research report by a national research institute shows that the fertility rate of low-educated women has been decreasing relatively faster in the recent cohort (Shin, 2020). Using the Census data, Shin (2020) reports that the period TFR fell in all educational groups from 1997 to 2017, but the fertility rate of women in high school and below fell more rapidly from 1.75 to 1.08 (0.67) compared to women in college and above (from 1.34 to 1.07, 0.27), as a result, in 2017, the fertility rates of the two groups became almost similar.

Another research paper using the National health insurance database shows that the proportion of deliveries by low-income families decreased significantly between 2007 and 2018 (Park, 2019). Using the Census microdata linked to the National insurance database, Kye, Lee, and Kim (2020) also reached the same conclusion that even though the declining fertility is widely observed across all income groups the fertility drop is more conspicuous among the lower-income groups (Kye, Lee and Kim, 2020).

Figure E.7. Changes in the %number of births by income decile, 2007-2018



Note: data points from Park (2019)'s NARS report.

II. Women are concentrated in low-wage jobs where work-and-family balance is harder to achieve

The gender equity in Korea measured by the gender wage gap is the lowest among OECD countries (The gender wage gap is 0.31 as of 2021 while the OECD average is 0.12). There is another index that Korea hits the world's lowest. It is the TFR. One might say that it is too obvious not to see the connection between them, but it is only recently that researchers have begun to pay attention to the relationship between women's work and fertility in Korea.

One of the reasons for the large gender wage gap in Korea is that women are disproportionately located in Small-to-Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) where low-wage jobs are concentrated. In Korea, 66% of employed women while 53% of employed men work in small firms. This gender disparity continues in the younger workers. 60% of working women, compared to 48% of working men, in their 20s and 30s are in establishments employing less than 30 employees.

Statistics show that it is harder to achieve a balance between work and family in low-wage jobs mainly in SMEs. Among young workers in their 20s and 30s, workers without a 4-year college degree are more likely to work longer hours or on irregular work schedules including shift work. Based on the 2021 Survey on Working Conditions by Employment Status collected by the Ministry of Labor, overtime hours are 1.7 times more for low-educated women than for college graduates and 2.3 times more for low-educated men than men with college graduates. In the case of working on holidays, there are more than twice as many women and men with low education compared to those with college graduates or higher.

Recently, studies increasingly have been focusing on the relationship between jobs and childbirth. According to J. Kim (2022), when young people's jobs were categorized based on various patterns of working hours, young people in "overwork type" jobs had significantly lower marital intentions, and 90% of these negative relationships were mediated by sheer fatigue and

lack of sleep (Kim, 2022a). In other words, young women and men in overworked jobs who are too tired to have the time or motivation to create a relationship of intimacy are difficult to plan for marriage, childbirth, and childcare. Jobs that require extreme overtime and intermittent working hours are widely scattered in low-wage jobs in the IT industry, cultural production industry, and social service industries in the form of passionate start-up jobs, internships for future careers, and freelance or platform jobs.

III. Women's jobs and diverging narratives of fertility

Then how do women's work and working condition affect their fertility decisions? Using the 2018 Korean General Social Survey-linked semi-structured interview data(N=104), Y. Kim (2022) analyzes how Koreans in their 20s and 30s make decisions on fertility and how they justify their decisions (Kim, 2022b). The analysis reveals that narratives of fertility are surprisingly homogenous and converge to a dominant narrative that carries education, housing, competition, normality, and parental responsibility as key components, which are usually considered concerns to the middle class. The dominant narrative that takes the form of "if you can't take responsibility, you'd better not give a birth" is pervasive among our low-income participants and make them set a 'fertility bar' much higher than the marriage bar, which is drastically different from a set of US research on marriage and fertility behaviors of low-income families (Edin and Kefalas, 2011).

However, there is a subtle variation across class and gender, revealing women's dilemma surrounding work and babies and their diverged manifestation across the class. In our sample, among young women in their 20s-30s, both married and unmarried, two subgroups emerged; they are distinctive in their socioeconomic status and their narratives of work and fertility decisions as well. The first group, the 'career-oriented' women, who are mostly college graduates in professional/managerial jobs, tend to value their work as achievement and self-fulfillment while the second group, the 'job-oriented' women, who are mostly high school or 2-year college graduates in low-wage jobs, tend to value their work as a way of earning income. As Falkenberg and Monachello (1990) emphasize the difference between a 'dual-career family' and a 'dual-job family', career-oriented women and job-oriented women have different experiences with respect to 'role overload' and 'identity issues', and their coping strategies differ as they are likely to have different resources and support systems (Falkenberg and Monachello, 1990).

The career-oriented women tend to express their strong desire not to give up their "career". Parenting was understood as a responsibility to be held for a 'lifetime', and a burden to live up to the 'competitive culture' of Korean society. As such, the conflict between the burden of parenting and the desire to maintain a career is described as a justifiable reason for the reluctance to give birth.

My husband liked it when I said I had a baby, but my heart wasn't ready. I wasn't confident. When I had a baby, I cried a lot. I wanted to get promoted and I felt like I'm going to fall behind my colleagues. I felt a lot of pressure to raise him for the rest of my life, so I cried a lot. (Cha

Yu-jin, 30, married)

On the other hand, job-oriented women are generally not satisfied with the environment of their workplace and tend to attribute the purpose of their work to money. They expressed strong concerns that if they have children they might have to continue working to financially contribute to family income as a single income from their husbands is not enough to raise children. For them, a working mom's life is imagined as a dire situation where they have to bear the unfavorable working condition from the outside and "*dokbak yuka* (caring for children alone without help from husband)" from the inside. As such, the situation in which job-oriented women were "forced" to combine paid work with child-rearing is described as a reason for the reluctance to give birth.

"In the end, I know I will give birth, but I really don't feel like it. My father worked for a large company, so my mother was able to be a stay-at-home mom, but now the times have changed so much that husband and wife both have to work. So I have to work and then do housework and childcare… It's so hard. Making money as a woman is hard physically. (Chae Ha-eun, 29 years old, unmarried)

In the context of long workhour culture and strong ideal worker norms prevalent in all workplaces in Korea, career-oriented women are afraid of career disruption by childbearing while job-oriented women are afraid of being forced to work and second-shift for childrearing. They reached the same conclusion with different narratives of fertility decisions.

IV. Policy Implication

This finding provides a clue to understanding not only the persistent lowest-low fertility in Korea but also the weakening of differential fertility. In the presence of a widespread fertility bar set so high to meet the middle-class parenting ideal, maintaining dual-earning becomes ever more important to secure economic resources of the family, a necessary condition for childbearing decision. However, the Korean corporate work environment still incompatible with workers with family responsibilities negatively affects women's childbearing intention, both middle-class career-oriented professionals in higher income deciles and working-class job-oriented women in lower income deciles. The result suggests changing Korean organizational culture so as not to restrict women's choice between work and baby can have a positive impact on women's fertility decisions in all socioeconomic positions.

It also poses that the gender-egalitarianism prediction on the fertility U-curve might not be realized soon in the context of labor market polarization. In Korea, the ever-growing economic gap between large conglomerates and SMEs has been pointed out as the structural problem responsible for labor market polarization and there have been many attempts at labor reform. However, most of the reformist attempts have been focusing on alleviating the wage gap between large companies and SMEs, and the gap in the work-life balance environment has not been on the table for discussion. But there is a good reason we should take this agenda more seriously.

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The Clash of Mothering Ideology and Work-Family Policies in South Korea

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"The new government's promise to society: through the expansion of women's economic participation and childcare services, we will support work-family balance!"
Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Official Twitter, August 5, 2022.

"In 2022, let's make childcare enjoyable through supportive work-family policies."
Ministry of Employment and Labor, March 17, 2022.

"It's not even funny, I really don't know who these policies are supposed to help…"
Joohee, 35, administrative assistant at a small trading company, mother of one.

Introduction

Largely due to the pressing need to simultaneously raise South Korea's (hereafter: Korea) birth rate and maintain a strong labor force, work-family balance has been at the top of the Korean government's policymaking agenda. The government has invested in various work-family, family-friendly, and maternal protection policies at both the national and organizational levels and in recent years, has been encouraging fathers to take childcare leave and participate in childcare labor. Despite significant government investment, however, the division of household and childcare labor remains highly gendered and Korea's birth rate has only dropped further. Even with conspicuous government support, then, why and in what ways are work-family policies falling short in supporting their intended beneficiaries? Based on interviews with 23 employed mothers, this paper suggests two limitations: current work-family policies (1) support working parents only at the early stages of childrearing and relatedly, (2) neglect underlying ideological and cultural forces within families. Demographers, economists, and sociologists have pointed to Korea's slow-changing cultural norms as it pertains to the family in Korea and neighboring East Asian societies (Hwang, 2021; Raymo et al., 2015). Yet, the family and parenting (specifically mothering) ideologies often remain a blind spot in work-family policymaking. While changes in the workplace are certainly necessary to push for both proximate and fundamental changes, this study calls for also placing the cultural and normative ideology of mothering at the forefront of analysis and policymaking. By centering mothering ideology, the present study shows a critical tension between policies and individual perspectives, as the quotes preceding this paper demonstrate.

This paper is organized as follows. I first discuss work-family policies and their limitations in Korea, in which I call for the importance of looking beyond the workplace when thinking about work-family conflict. Then, I examine intensive mothering ideology in the Korean context, with an eye towards intensive education management. The next section provides the perspectives of

working mothers, after which I discuss the "clash" between mothering ideology and work-family policies and then conclude with implications for policy moving forward.

Work-Family Policies in Korea and its Critiques

Overview of Work-Family Policies

Since the mid-2000s when demographic statistics began showing signs of low fertility and population aging, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MEL), the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW), and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) have published reports, initiated campaigns, and enacted policies with the goal to ease some of the early caretaking and financial burdens for working parents. As shown in table E.1, the government has frequently introduced and amended policies. Most recently, the MEL announced amendments to childcare leave, introducing the "three-plus-three" scheme and increasing childbirth and childcare benefits. The "three-plus-three" scheme encourages both mothers' and father's involvement in childcare by providing financial incentives to parents who simultaneously or consecutively take parental leave. If both parents take parental leave, each parent will be paid ₩2,000,000 (US $1,400), ₩3,000,000 (US $2,100) and ₩3,500,000 (US $2,500) or 100% of their full-time wages if their wages are less than the aforementioned amounts. Yet, this only applies to the first 12 months after childbirth. Childcare benefits in cash form, which amounts to a monthly payment of ₩100,000 (US $70) per child, are also limited to parents with children eight years old or younger. Similarly, longstanding childcare leave policies are limited to when children are six years old or younger. Thus, while the government has amended policies with the intention to better support working parents, the reforms have all occurred within the bounds of a limited childrearing range (eight years old or until the second year of elementary school). This calls for an investigation into whether the age range itself could be a source of policy discontent among individuals and if so, what cultural or structural factors are at play.

Table E.1. Current Work-Family Policies, Reforms, and Applicable Age Ranges

Policy	Description (as of 2022)*	Date introduced + subsequent reforms	Applicable age range
Childbirth benefits**	1-time payment of ₩2 million	2022	At birth
Childcare benefits (*Adongsudang*)	Monthly ₩100,000 payment	2018 + 2019, 2022	0-8 years 0-23 months
Yeongasudang	Monthly ₩300,000 for 0-23 months for children born in 2022 and later		
Child support allowance (*Yangyuksudang*)	Monthly ₩100,000 payment for parents not using childcare facilities and services. Applies to children between 24 months-7 years old (0-24 months are covered by newly introduced *yeongasudang*)***	2008 + 2011, 2013, 2015, 2018	0-7 years
Childcare leave	1 year of paid leave (80% of full-time wage)	1987 + 2001, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2020, 2021, 2022	0-6 years 1-3 months
3+3 Childcare leave	100% full-time wage (within a limited wage range) if both parents take leave during first 3 months after childbirth		
Maternity leave	90 days of paid leave. 45 days must be taken after childbirth	1953 +2001	0-12 months (+ period before childbirth)
Paternity leave	10 days of paid leave	2007 + 2012, 2019	0-3 months
Reduced work hours (childcare)	1 year of 15-30 work hours per week	2008 + 2019	0-8 years

* Policies are slightly different for the public sector (ie: public servant jobs). For example, childcare leave is up to 3 years for the public sector.
** This policy refers to the "First Meet" scheme (*cheot mannam iyonggwon*). Childbirth benefits not included in the "First Meet" scheme differ by region.
*** Prior to the enactment of *yeongasudang*, the allowance differed by age group: ₩200,000 for 0-11 months, ₩150,000 for 12-23 months, and ₩100,000 for 24-86 months.
Sources: Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2022c; Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2022b; Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2022d; Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2022a; Chin et al., 2012; Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2021; Ministry of Government Legislation, 2022b; Ministry of Government Legislation, 2022a; National Archives of Korea, 2022; Statistics Korea, 2019; Won, 2016.

Extant Critiques and Recommendations: Issues of Implementation at the Workplace

The government's efforts appear to be nominally effective. The number of companies that have been recognized by MOGEF for instituting family-friendly policies, have increased from nine entities in 2008 to a total of 4,918 in 2021 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family,

2022b). Parental leave uptake rates have also increased significantly in recent years with 81,557 female leave takers and 17,662 male leave takers in 2018, compared to 34,898 female and 502 male leave takers in 2009 (Statistics Korea, 2019).

Despite such efforts, however, work-family policies have garnered significant criticism. For example, while the uptake rates of childcare leave among men and women have certainly increased conspicuously, they are not as high or as equal as they could be as workers continue to face workplace barriers (Byun and Won, 2020; Kang, Park and Park, 2020; Kim and Parish, 2020; Won, 2005; Won, 2016). In fact, there remains a significant gender gap in childcare leave usage as female leave-takers made up 77.3% of total leave-takers, while male leave-takers made up the remaining 22.7% in 2020 (Statistics Korea, 2019). The MEL's "2020 State of Work-Family Balance Survey" reported that workers are hesitant to use work-family policies because of the burdens a leave would have on work colleagues and an overall leave-unfriendly organizational climate.

Recognizing these workplace barriers, scholars have increasingly called for changes in the workplace and labor market. Particularly, a breadth of research highlights Korea's competitive overwork and family-unfriendly culture (Byun and Won, 2020; Chin et al., 2012; Kim and Parish, 2020; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2022; Moon and Shin, 2018; Tsuya, Bumpass and Choe, 2000; Won, 2012). Korean workplaces are notorious for requiring employees to work long hours and overtime, a workplace practice that rests on and is bolstered by a male-breadwinner model. Such workplace practices and culture have significant effects on a variety of outcomes such as individuals' perceived work-family conflict, workplace satisfaction, and participation in household labor. For example, Moon and Shin (2018) argue that a workplace culture that pressures, incentivizes, and in some cases, coerces men to work long hours negatively impacts the frequency of men's participation in household and childcare labor. Delving deeper into workplace policy implementation, Kim and Parish (2020) argue that beyond availability, work-family policies need to be more accessible to reduce employed mothers' perceptions of work-family conflict.

While workplace and organizational solutions are certainly imperative, the workplace is but one sphere in a constellation of other institutions and cultural norms that contribute to work-family conflict (Collins, 2020; Lee, 2022). Additionally, if we measure the effectiveness of policies only through changes in the workplace, we could inadvertently overlook other related sources of gender inequality and work-family conflict. For example, whether gradual increases in workplace policy uptake by both men and women automatically translate into a more equal gendered division of household and childcare labor remains to be proven (Byun and Won 2020). In other words, it is unclear whether the increase in policy uptake is an auspicious sign that the male-breadwinner, female caregiver norm is being upended. In fact, despite record increases in leave uptake rates, men and women's time spent on unpaid childcare and household work remains highly gendered. According to the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI), women spent 219 minutes per weekday on household and childcare labor while men spent 30

minutes in 2020 (Korea Women's Development Institute, 2021). This reality is despite the fact that individuals increasingly disapprove of the male-breadwinner, female-caretaker ideology (Korea Women's Development Institute, 2021; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2022a). This calls for a more in-depth investigation into diverse policymaking targets beyond the workplace. Such efforts are necessary to both complement workplace-focused policies and address other cultural and ideological processes driving gender inequality and exacerbating individuals' sense of work-family conflict.

Looking beyond the Workplace

In addition to implementation issues at the workplace, scholars have raised concerns about the Korean government's intentions behind work-family policies. Through a comparison between the Roh Moo-hyun (politically progressive) and Lee Myung-bak (politically conservative) administrations, Ma et al (2016) find that the work-family policies enacted under both administrations were limited insofar as they were based on an "instrumentalist women's employment" frame. This meant that both administrations enveloped work-family balance and women's employment issues under national instrumental and economic development priorities, neglecting to address the fundamental issues of gender inequality (Ma, Kim and Lee, 2016). This has resulted in a series of policies encouraging women to enter and stay in the labor force while leaving the underlying cultural and ideological forces driving gender inequality untouched, what England (2010) has termed for the U.S. context: a gender revolution that has shaped out to be "uneven and stalled. (England, 2010)" As Kang et al (2020) suggest, practical arrangements, such as leave schemes and work hour arrangements must align with *ideological* support for policies to be effective (Kang, Park and Park, 2020). In the next section, I briefly explain intensive mothering ideology, education management, and the interaction between the two to examine one key underexamined cultural mechanism driving a mismatch between working mothers' perspectives and work-family policies.

Intensive Mothering Ideology and the Gendered Division of Education Management

Middle-Class Mothering Ideologies and Education Management in the Korean Context

What it means to be a good mother and how to be a good mother are socially constructed, context-specific, and historically variable expectations (Glenn, 2016) influenced by the presence of and interactions among cultural ideals, work-family policies, and types of welfare states (Collins, 2019). One persistent cultural ideal is intensive mothering ideology (Hays, 1996), the expectation that mothers will intensively prioritize and care for their children. Importantly, scholars find that intensive mothering ideology holds moral sway over women's work and family decisions even against changing realities such as the entrance of women into the work force and the rise in the number of dual-earner married parents (Blair-Loy, 2009; Collins, 2019; Damaske, 2013). In the Korean context, what it means to be a "good mother" has become intimately tied to

managing children's education especially amidst the neoliberal transformation of the post-1997 IMF crisis (Park, 2009; Park and Abelmann, 2004). In this context, the physical, mental, financial, and emotional effort and resources that intensive mothering ideology demands not only applies to caretaking and nurturing, but also extends to education management responsibilities.

Although education management is certainly not a homogenous ideology that all mothers fulfill or fulfill in the same way (Oh, 2020), scholars have extensively studied both the educational zeal within Korean society (Seth, 2002) and more specifically, Korean *mothers'* intensive involvement in children's education and college preparation (Baek, 2017; Kang, Park and Park, 2020; Lee, 2015; Park, 2009; Park, 2007; Park and Abelmann, 2004). Park (2007), for example, highlights how the normative discourse surrounding "educational manager mothers" dominantly regulates individuals' mothering practices in all social classes even though the discourse itself narrowly rests on middle-class, full-time housewives' experiences. Ultimately, the successes or failures of their children's education, which is often evaluated on entrance into a top university, squarely falls on the shoulders of mothers. While education management is not necessarily devalued as education serves as an important social status marker and opportunity for class mobility (Milkie and Warner, 2014), it is normatively expected that mothers will be the ones behind the scenes managing the day-to-day tasks of scheduling, driving, and making sure children are emotionally satisfied and cognitively stimulated, labor which often goes unnoticed. With the rise in the number of dual-earner married couples, working mothers are also increasingly financially supporting their children's education. From this viewpoint, do working mothers feel supported by policies? Are current work-family policies, largely targeted at workplace changes and the early stages of childrearing, effective in addressing this education management burden? In the next section, I suggest that work-family policies overlook the *continuous* nature of mothering, focusing on easing parents,' and specifically mothers' work and family burdens at the early childrearing stages. As I describe below, "intensive mothering" via "education management" is an ideology that becomes constantly perpetuated instead of abandoned after the nurturing stage of childrearing.

Education Management as Long-Term Mothering: Perspectives from Working Mothers

Sample Characteristics and Method

This study relies on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 23 working mothers conducted in the summer of 2022. Interviewees were all married, lived and worked in the Seoul metropolitan area, had at least one child younger than 8, had at least a 2-year university degree, and were working or on parental leave with the intention to return to work at the time of the interview. See table E.2 for sample characteristics.

I recruited interviewees through restricted snowball sampling initially using my personal ties. To avoid homogeneity within the sample, I restricted referrals to a maximum of 3 referrals per person. In-person interviews lasted 50 minutes to 1.5 hours and I followed up with 10

interviewees either through phone calls or through written responses for clarification purposes. Interviews began with a set of structured questions to collect demographic information and proceeded with "ice-breaking" questions, after which I asked more in-depth questions regarding their work experiences, childrearing stages, how they navigate work-family conflict, how they negotiate childcare with their partners and other family members, and their overall thoughts on work-family policies. All individuals whose voices appear in this paper are given pseudonyms and I changed other identifying characteristics for confidentiality.

Table E.2. Sample Characteristics (N=23)

Characteristic	Value
Mean age	37.8
Education level	
2-year university	n = 2
4-year university	n = 19
Graduate degree	n = 2
Current employment type	
Full-time (large corporate and SME)	n = 13
Self-employed	n = 8
Teacher	n = 2
Average work hours per week	47
Average number of children	1.3
Child(ren)'s age	
0-4	n = 11
5-8	n = 13
8+	n = 9
Used at least one policy at the time of interview (excluding childbirth payments)	n = 17
Maternity leave	n = 10
Childcare leave	n = 10
Reduced work hours	n = 2

Education Management as a Long-Term Mothering Role

One specific mechanism through which intensive mothering ideology becomes perpetuated is the cultural expectation that mothers will engage in education management. Education management requires parents to schedule and manage children's school and after-school educational activities, labor which is not only time-intensive, but also cognitively or mentally demanding (Daminger, 2019; Dean, Churchill and Ruppanner, 2022). Equally intensive, this cognitive labor differs from the more physical demands of diapering, breastfeeding, and weening, responsibilities that are not only more visible but also are expected

to end after a few years. The cognitive aspect of education management labor also has much at stake: the promise of a return on investment in the form of social mobility or safeguarding (Milkie and Warner 2014). Thus, mothers' time spent on childcare as children grow older becomes "…reallocated, not liberated" (Arendell, 2001). One interviewee, Dahyun (35, a manager at a large IT company, mother of two) explained this shift from physical to cognitive maternal responsibility:

> My oldest son will start elementary school next year, so I'm dealing with a major challenge as a mother. While raising children, I realized that there are particularly difficult stages. The first is when I was breastfeeding and then weening my child. That was really *physically* taxing. The second is when your child starts walking and starts to touch everything. Then comes the *emotional* hardship when your kid starts talking and you have to make sure not to hurt their feelings. And now I'm at a stage where I have to start thinking about how I am going to *manage* my son's education when he starts school… I am always thinking to myself "can I manage his education while maintaining my career? How long can I keep this up?" (Emphasis added).

Dahyun alluded to different hardships she faced as her child entered distinct developmental stages. The early stages, when working parents receive the most public support, were filled with physical and nurturing tasks, including nursing, feeding, diapering, and emotional caring. While she was not at the stage of "education management" just yet, she had already reconfigured and internalized an intensive mothering ideology that was more cognitively demanding than the physically and emotionally demanding stages she experienced earlier. In other words, Dahyun had recognized that the caretaking and nurturing role would come to an end, but instead of viewing this as the end to her intensive mothering responsibilities, she had prolonged the process and deemed it natural that her mothering role would extend into her child's schooling years. Notably, Dahyun, as did other interviewees, did not specify a finishing line. Unless prompted, Dahyun also did not bring up her husband once when talking about managing her children's education. Another working mother, Taeri (35, IT start-up CEO and English teacher, mother of one) who was in the thick of managing her 6-year-old son's education, explained:

> You know it's kind of ironic. [Childrearing] becomes more difficult as your kid gets older. When your child is really young, like an infant, everyone around you knows that you just gave birth, so people are willing to help out. My husband and family members helped a lot then. But once my son became older and started to do things like eat on his own and dress himself, people around me stopped helping and I had to start thinking about his emotional and cognitive development. Once that stage came, my work-life balance completely broke down.

She then continued about managing her son's education:

> It is important to share information with other mothers on which hagwon could be the right match, which exam is when, and how to talk to teachers. I'm the primary person in charge of my son's education and his schedule or who he is

> studying with. And it has been really hard working 2 jobs and taking care of my son's education.

Taeri expected that her mothering responsibilities would become less taxing after the first years after childbirth, but she found that her burdens increased and became *more invisible* as her support network of her husband and family members also dwindled. Because of the invisibility of this labor, Taeri felt she had no support from the government, her husband, or her family members, all of whom assumed that she would need less help once her son started school and was more independent. Other mothers in this study also explained that as mothers, they were *primarily* responsible for their children's education, including researching which after-school activities to enroll their children in, meeting with teachers and other parents (primarily other mothers), helping with homework, and managing the day-to-day schedule, what interviewees often referred to as playing a game of "scheduling tetris." All the mothers quoted above besides Taeri had access to and used work-family policies, such as maternity leave, parental leave, and reduced work hours. Yet, the kinds of stress and burdens they shouldered not only incited perceptions of heightened conflict between work and family, but also lied outside the boundaries of both current work-family policies and the workplace setting.

Not only did mothers with older elementary and middle school children already experience the stresses of education management, mothers with very young children (0-4 years old), *anticipated* an intense involvement in managing their children's education in the future. As Yoojung (37, a freelance artist, mother of one) explained: "This year, my daughter began some extra-curricular activities and soon she will start her private education (*sagyoyuk)*." Our daily rhythm is already ruined, and I think it will get worse." Like other working mothers in this sample, Yoojung wondered whether she could manage her work and her child's education responsibilities all at once and while she saved a year of her parental leave in anticipation of this difficulty, she was worried how she would manage once her leave period would end. While most working mothers in this sample expected that many aspects of their caretaking responsibilities will diminish as their children grow older and more independent, they also anticipated that their involvement in their children's education will remain high, steady, and intense. Mina (38, private high-school teacher and mother of two) noted an experience of a colleague, who at the time of the interview, was a mother of a high-schooler preparing for college. Talking to and observing her fellow teacher and mother, Mina concluded that her education management duties would probably not end anytime soon even as her eldest daughter has already adjusted to elementary school life.

The Clash of Ideology and Policy

As mentioned above, the Korean government has continuously reformed and amended work-family policies to ease the early financial and caretaking burdens of parents. It is through such supports that the government sees will increase the country's birth rate. Yet, much of the reforms have been limited to parents with young children (under eight years old or until the second year

of elementary school). These policy reforms stand in contrast to the cultural ideologies that demand mothers to continuously care for children, especially, as examined above, when it comes to children's education. For working mothers who had some access to work-family policies, they anticipated a difficult transition once their child(ren) started elementary school and private education, noting the lack of support from policies, family members, and partners. For self-employed mothers or those who worked in small-to-medium sized companies with no access to formal work-family policies, they anticipated *continued* and heightened difficulties in juggling their work/careers and education management responsibilities. A large part of their logic is that mothers, especially in the current social and economic moment marked by exorbitant housing prices, rising youth unemployment, and overall rising costs of living, hope to secure or encourage some form of social mobility for their children and the family (Milkie and Warner 2014).

The dominant and all-encompassing nature of mothering ideologies (Hays 1996; Blair-Loy 2003; Collins 2019) also frame how mothers assess work-family policies. As Collins (2019; 2020) explains, the interplay between welfare states, work-family policies and cultural ideals impacts the types and degrees of support that mothers expect from partners, family members, and state policies. Largely dissatisfied with the state of policies, working mothers in this sample had laundry lists of workplace and national-level policy supports they would like to see implemented, from earlier workplace leave times, flexible work policies such as work-from-home options, and better-quality daycare and after-school classes. Additionally, interviewees' dissatisfactions with current policies centered around a key theme: the limited *scope* of government policies. As Joohee (introduced in the quote preceding this paper) furiously expressed when asked about recent government efforts to lower the school-starting age: "I don't know who these policies are supposed to help!" Sua (35, self-employed working in e-commerce, mother of two) also criticized: "I know the government pays us when we give birth and I understand that they are doing their best. But how am I supposed to *raise* and educate my children with that money? It is just impossible." (Emphasis added). Even though mothers in this sample saw themselves as primarily responsible for managing their children's education, it is clear that their understandings of *raising* children into adulthood contrasts with the kinds of available government support centered around early childcare. After their child(ren) turn eight years old, parents, and as is most often the case, *mothers* are left to privately and individually deal with the ceaseless and intensive demands of mothering and work.

Conclusion and Implications for Policy

Through the voices of Korean middle-class working mothers, this paper illustrates how work-family policies and the government's many reforms have fallen short in addressing the cultural expectations of intensive mothering at *multiple* childrearing stages. Working mothers in this sample assessed work-family policies through the frame of an intensive mothering ideology and due to a clash between what policies provide and what mothering ideology demands,

mothers were left feeling frustrated and unsupported. If the government continues to reform policies only aimed at the caretaking and nurturing responsibilities of parents with very young children, then at best, resources could go to waste, but at worst, the cultural norm that mothers are solely responsible for their children's education and that they are expected to do so without any structural or policy-level support, is left untouched. It is thus imperative to expand our policy focus from practical workplace solutions to include the cultural ideologies that underpin the gendered division of unpaid care labor within families. Assuming that changes in the workplace through strengthened and incentivized leave schemes will solely and automatically result in changes within the family and that these policies will *sustain* work-family balance over the course of raising children overlooks the powerful cultural forces of intensive mothering ideology.

Yet, targeting cultural ideologies, especially when it pertains to a deeply personal and moral ideology, such as mothering, is a formidable task. Recognizing the gendered division of education management is just the first step. Enacting meaningful policies that target structural, ideological, and cultural forces rather than individual behavior is the next fundamental step. Policymakers should consider greater cross-ministerial involvement and collaboration beyond the Ministry of Employment and Labor and the Ministry of Health and Welfare to account for the holistic and various ways work-family balance and conflict emerge in working parents' and mothers' daily lives. As this study shows, education management serves as a key mechanism through which mothers reconfigure intensive mothering ideology. Deliberate institutional changes to the competitive education system and greater involvement from the Ministry of Education could also lead to meaningful changes. Finally, policymakers should ensure that in their well-intentioned efforts to support work-family balance, they do not inadvertently reinforce the gendered dimension of education management. Ultimately, the clash between ideology and policy suggests a need for scholars and policymakers to consider how policies can address the more elusive goal of cultural or ideological change to not only raise the fertility rate, but also more broadly tackle the persistent and hidden drivers of gender inequality in multiple spheres of Korean society.

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To Promote Female Labor Force Participation of South Korea: Lessons Learned from the EU

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South Korea has been experiencing lower female labor force participation rate than the OECD average for the last decades. Notably, over the life cycle, Korean's female labor force participation curve is 'M-shaped' with women leaving the labor force during childbearing years and reentering later as their children age (Lee, Jang and Sarkar, 2008). A lot of literature insist that social norms limit women's choice of whether to work or where they work. Also, there has been some evidence of perception that women hold prime responsibility for housework and childcare. Therefore, women in Korea are significantly more likely to leave the labor force than men when they start a family (Tanaka and Muzones, 2016).

Policymakers in South Korea have sought to become more proactive about this issue, through enacting laws on gender equity in the workplace, better maternity leave provisions, and other measures. Research on this issue suggests, however, that trend of female workforce participation is linked to a third variable, workplace conditions. However, the linkage is complex. They have been researched for Western Europe, but less work has been done for Asia. The findings for Western Europe show a dramatic impact of working conditions on shaping trends in fertility and workforce participation in a positive way.

Over the last decade, female labor supply in Europe has shown a significant increase. The social norms and values has been changed from either being a mother or a worker to being a working mother, as is evident in European countries. In many European countries, policies are, therefore, aimed at increasing female participation rates by easing the combination of work and family life (Vlasblom and Schippers, 2004). In this regard, the increase in women workforce participation rates in European countries provide a significant implication for Korea that it is possible to raise female workforce participation balancing work and family life.

This suggests that Korean policymakers could focus on a fairly narrow range of policy options, to do with workforce conditions, to achieve their policy goals. This paper applies the workforce conditions from the EU Working Conditions Survey to data for Korea, for analyzing these relationships, and draws lessons for policymakers. Its purpose is to provide quantitative evidence on the impact of European working conditions on women’s workforce participation rate. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt to test the hypotheses using the EU Working Conditions Survey data empirically.

This paper proceeds as follows. In section 1, background and a literature review will be presented. In section 2, hypotheses and approach are discussed. In Section 3, research methodology will be explained. In Section 4, research results will be reported. In Section 5 implications of the findings will be discussed. Then, in Section 6, limitations of my study will be presented. In Section 7, summarizing and identifying areas for further research will be discussed.

Section 1. Background and Literature Review

1A. Female Workforce Participation

South Korea has been experienced lower female labor force participation rate than the OECD average since records were kept in the 1950s. Specifically, Since 1990, the female labor force participation rate has increased from 46.7 percent to 53 percent in 2020. However, compared to other countries it is not significant. Notably, over the life cycle, Korean's female labor force participation curve is 'M-shaped' with women leaving the labor force during childbearing years and reentering later as their children age (Lee, Jang and Sarkar, 2008). As may be seen, this is in common with other similar countries at the early stages of fertility decline. However, recent trends suggest that the M-shaped curve persists in Korea whereas the curve has smoothed out in other countries.

This may be related to Korean social norms that limit women's choice of whether to work and where they work. Also, there has been some evidence that women hold prime responsibility for housework and childcare. As a result, women are significantly more likely than men to leave the labor force when they start a family (Tanaka and Muzones, 2016).

1B. Public policy and workforce participation

There are a number of policy instruments which could affect female labor force participation such as family taxation, childcare subsidies and child benefits, parental leave, the flexibility of working time arrangements, anti-discrimination laws, and other policies (Jaumotte, 2004).

There is ample evidence that high marginal tax rates reduce labor supply and, as labor supply is more elastic for females than for males, the impact on female labor participation could be significant. There is empirical evidence showing that childcare subsidies do increase female labor supply, though in some instances their effectiveness is reduced as, for example, women substitute formal for informal childcare (Jaumotte, 2004). Another form of government support for families with children is child benefits, which are essentially lump-sum transfers for the maintenance of children. However, there are different views about the size of the effects of childcare support on female labor participation or employment, so the size of government childcare support and the kind which is provided differ across countries. Also, maternity leave, parental leave, and childcare leaves boost female participation by helping women reconcile work and family life. There is some evidence; however, that long parental leaves make it more difficult for women to return to the labor market (Ondrich et al., 2003). Furthermore, part-time working is often seen as a means to facilitate the integration of women in the labor market, by allowing them to combine work with family responsibilities. In OECD countries about one-quarter of female workers at age 25-54 have part-time jobs. According to OECD, countries, where this share is high, are Netherlands and Switzerland as of 2016.

Gender discrimination in pay and promotion opportunities reduces the return to female market work and tends to depress female labor supply. Most countries have introduced gender

specific and anti-discrimination laws. These have been relatively effective in lowering the gender pay gap and more rapidly so in countries that had more centralized wage bargaining structures at the time of introduction of the law (e.g., Australia and the United Kingdom, as opposed to the United States). The higher wages stimulate female participation, but the evidence on employment effects is mixed (Jaumotte, 2004).

Section 2. Approach & Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is as follows.

H1. Improvement of working environment will promote female workforce participation in the long run.

1.1 Decrease in working hours will encourage female workforce participation in the long term.

1.2 Decrease in gender wage gap will raise women's workforce participation in the long run.

1.3 Flexibility in working arrangements will support female workforce participation in the long run.

Section 3. Research Methodology

A panel structure of data gives more information, variability and efficiency in comparison to time series or cross-sectional data, as it allows us to study the dynamics of adjustment and to distinguish between within-country and between-country variation (Luci-Greulich and Thévenon, 2013).

Table E.3. Definition of indicators

Indicator	Definition		Principal data resource
Employment rate of women	A measure of the extent to which available women labor resources(people available to work)	Women, % of working age population(15 to 64), 1955 – 2021	OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics
Average annual hours actually worked per worker	The total number of hours worked over the year divided by the average number of people in employment	Annual hours, 2000 - 2021	OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics
Gender wage gap	The difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men	Total, % of male median wage, 1970 – 2021	OECD Social and Welfare Statistics
Working time arrangements (flexibility)	The proportion of people who can adapt flexibility in their working hours		Eurofound, European working conditions survey

Employment rate of women (Women, % of working age population, 2021)

Employment rates are defined as a measure of the extent to which available labor resources (people available to work) are being used. They are calculated as the ratio of the employed to the working age population. Employed people are those aged 15 or over who report that they have

worked in gainful employment for at least one hour in the previous week or who had a job but were absent from work during the reference week. The working age population refers to people aged 15 to 64. This indicator is seasonally adjusted, and it is measured regarding thousand persons aged 15 and over; and as a percentage of working age population (OECD, 2018a).

Hours worked (Total, Hours/worker, 1950 – 2021)

Average annual hours worked is defined as the total number of hours actually worked per year divided by the average number of people in employment per year. The data cover employees and self-employed workers. This indicator is measured in terms of hours per worker per year (OECD, 2018c).

Gender wage gap (Total, % of male median wage, 2021)

The gender wage gap is unadjusted and is defined as the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men. Data refer to full-time employees and to self-employed (OECD, 2018b).

Working time arrangements (flexibility)

Every five years, since 1990, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has conducted a survey (EWCS) analyzing working conditions across Europe. These surveys provide a comprehensive overview of the state of working conditions in Europe, as well as indicating the type and extent of changes affecting the workforce and the quality of work. The scope of the survey questionnaire has widened substantially since the first edition, aiming to provide a comprehensive picture of the everyday reality of men and women at work. Gender mainstreaming has been an essential concern for recent reviews of the questionnaire. They include employment status, working time duration and organization, work organization, learning and training, physical and psychosocial risk factors, health and safety, work-life balance, worker participation, earnings and financial security, as well as work and health.

The question used for data on working conditions in EU; how are your working time arrangements set? Then, the proportions of ‘working hours can be chosen /adapted,’ and ‘working hours are entirely determined by myself’ are added up to be used for flexibility variable. The survey data years are 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Eurofound had to terminate face-to-face fieldwork for the EWCS 2020 after only seven weeks and changed it to telephone survey for the EWCS 2021. The data covers Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and Turkey (Western Europe; 6 / Northern Europe; 4 / Southern Europe; 3 / Eastern Europe; 3).

In this paper, a fixed effects model, which is a way of looking at the repeated observation over time, has been used to take a closer look at how independent variables affect dependent

variables. A fixed effects model refers to a regression model in which the group means are fixed (non-random). The countries and the years were fixed from the data. Fixed effects method reduces the threat of omitted variable bias by taking into account any unobserved factors that vary across countries or years, but that does not vary within country or year. This is why fixed effects method is better for longitudinal data than regular OLS regression). Moreover, cubic spline interpolation, which is to draw smooth curves through a number of points, has been used for the three years European working condition survey data. According to McKinley (1988), cubic spline interpolation is a powerful data analysis tool which correlates data efficiently and effectively, no matter how random the data may seem (McKinley and Levine, 1998).

Section 4. Research Results

Table E.4. Time and country fixed effects on female labor force participation

Variable	Female labor force participation
Type of regression	Time and country fixed effects
Regressors	
Average annual hours actually worked per worker m1	-0.303498** (0.0095439)
Gender wage gap m4	-0.1529491* (0.0762958)
Flexibility in working hours m2	15.99392* (7.105745)
Country-specific time trends	Yes
Time dummies	Yes
Country dummies	Yes
N	115
No. of countries	17
Time period	2005-2021
R-squared (without dummies and time trends)	0.4035 (within)
R-squared adj.	0.2093

The average annual hours actually worked per worker and gender wage gap shows a negative impact on the female labor force participation and the flexibility in working hours show a positive relation on female labor force participation. Especially, flexibility in the working hours leads to an increase of 15 percentage of female labor force participation, which is significant.

Section 5. Discussions

Public policies have an undeniable effect on families. However, the links between public policies and demographic behavior are very complicated. They depend on the type of policies, the levels of benefits, the conditions of eligibility, and the income and opportunity sets of

individuals, as well as the norms, stigma, and sanctions associated with the receipt of benefits (Gauthier, 2007). Nevertheless, it is meaningful to study policies of other countries and refer to successful precedents.

The EU has been promoting greater gender equality and flexibility in the labor market through a mix of legislation, policy guidance, and financial support. Several directives exist setting out minimum requirements to ensure equality between women and men, including minimum standards for leaves and flexible working arrangements, which facilitated women's labor force participation.

The Commission has also issued a Recommendation in 2014 on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency. Furthermore, many Member States have been undertaking reforms to enhance work-life balance policies and increase the labor force participation of women. Flexible workplace practices are often primarily designed to address employer needs in the production process, but they can also improve the work-life balance of employees in a manner which is consistent with enterprise needs (International Labour Organization, 2016). Working time flexibility can help working parents to reconcile their work-schedule with childcare center and school hours, and can make an essential contribution employees' satisfaction with their work-life balances (Cazes, Hijzen and Saint-Martin, 2015). Working from home saves time on the commute and helps employees to be close to children and partners in case of care needs.

The flexible working arrangements vary around the EU. For example, Italy is in the process of increasing flexible working arrangements to tackle high unemployment rates and make the job market more dynamic and attractive. At the same time, its Government wants to improve work-life balance for employees. Provisions for flexible working have been provided in law and national collective agreements for some time, with part-time working being the most popular. Reforms enacted in 2015, introduced critical experimental provisions aiming at giving more maternity protection and increasing work-life balance for employees. Moreover, within the framework of offering a better work-life balance, changes were planned concerning telework, which has not been covered by the law but regulated by special agreements and provisions of national collective bargaining agreements. The reform aimed to incentivize the use of telework by employers. In Germany, larger companies offer a wide variety of flexible working time options, for example flexi-time, working hours based on trust between the employer and employee, on-call working or annualized hours working, often regulated by collective or collective agreements. Also, flexible working arrangements have been offered for a long time in France, but recent legislation introduced a new concept of flexibility. This was not only for the benefit of the employees, but also to allow businesses to adapt to change. The importance of maintaining a good work-life balance has been recognized by French law for many years, but now the Government is considering provisions for employers' needs for flexibility.

The availability of flexible working arrangements such as telework and flexitime and of reduced working hours (part-time work), also influence female employment. Insufficient

availability of flexible working arrangements and/or of possibilities to reduce working hours can lead to people with caring responsibilities, particularly women, to drop out of the labor market altogether. Eurofound has reported that more than half of the inactive mothers would prefer to work part-time. Such insufficient availability of flexible working arrangements or of possibilities to reduce working hours can also lead to women changing their job to one that is perceived as offering more flexibility or reduced working hours, which is often below their skill level or for less pay. This consequently can lead to or foster gender wage gaps. The main drivers of effective flexible working arrangements are the presence of underlying consensus amongst the social partners or employers that flexibility is valuable, a workplace culture supportive of flexible working, and responsiveness to changing needs over the life course. Therefore, the design of flexible working arrangements is also central.

The average annual hours actually worked per worker as of 2016, recorded 2,069 hours in Korea, which was more than any country in the OECD other than Mexico (2,255) and Costa Rica. The government of Korea has recognized this issue therefore, on Feb. 28, 2018 the South Korean National Assembly passed a bill aimed at reducing the country's maximum working hours from 68 hours a week to 52 hours. Also, to mitigate any potential side effects from rising labor costs and a recent rise in minimum wage, the new working hours are being rolled out in stages depending on the size of the company. However, as seen in the data results, for Korea, female workforce participation issue cannot be solved only by reducing the working hours, it needs to be related to the flexibility in the working hours. In conclusion, by referring to European case, as shown above, ensuring the quality of flexible work and avoiding gender inequalities in the labor market will be the key to provide work-life balance for Korea to facilitate women's labor force participation. More importantly, to make this effective when policy makers enact laws, the culture of Korea should be thoroughly considered.

Section 6. Limitations

There is a limitation to this paper. As discussed above in the previous section, it has been shown through analysis of the data that improvement of working conditions in Europe has led to an increase of female labor force participation. Specifically, a decrease in the gender wage gap and flexibility in the working hours had a significant impact on female labor force participation. Despite these data results, the result might vary within European countries if the data were to be analyzed thoroughly. There are still very large differences between the Member States regarding flexibility of working time. Flexibility in length of working time is more widespread in northern and western Europe compared to southern and eastern Europe. According to European Commission, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Finland and Norway score relatively highly in flexible organization with a little more than half of all employees using some kind of flexibility in their working hours. Due to the lack of data, this paper did not look into European countries by dividing areas of Europe, therefore, further study is needed.

Section 7. Conclusion

Socioeconomic changes and a higher level of educational attainment have led to increases in Korean women's contributions to the labor market. Despite the increased economic participation, however, most housework and childcare responsibilities still lie with women, which often leads to work-family conflict. Work-family conflict occurs when the demands of family and work are incompatible. Not surprisingly, a majority of those who experience this conflict are married women working outside the home, upon whom the pressure of domestic responsibility and work responsibilities continue to mount (Kim, 2015).

In this paper, a fixed effects method was employed to demonstrate the application of European working conditions to South Korean female workforce participation, which led to profound implications. This paper shows that if the policy focuses on better working conditions the data proves that it is possible to stimulate female economic participation. As we have seen in the results, average annual hours actually worked per worker, and gender wage gap have negative correlations with women's workforce participation rate. Moreover, a flexible working arrangement has a positive correlation with women's workforce participation rate. Therefore, in order to raise female workforce participation of Korea, reducing the discriminatory practices against women and flexibility in the working hours are vital, which could ultimately lead to an increase in the women's workforce participation.

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How Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and Gender Issues Fit into Workplaces in Korea

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1. The Rights to Equality in the Constitution and Gender Equality in Enterprises

The Constitution has several provisions on equal rights. Article 11.of the Constitution states that ‘all citizens are equal before the law, and shall not be discriminated against, by gender, religion, or social status in all areas of politics, economy, society and culture, and Article 32.stipulates that women's labor should be protected and no discrimination should be made in employment, wages and working conditions.

Since the Constitution is a standard that stipulates the relationship between the state and the people, the people cannot directly demand equal treatment from companies based on the Constitution. The state can only make laws and enforce them to prohibit gender discrimination in companies and treat women equally based on the Constitution. The Labor Standards Act, the Equal Employment Act, the National Human Rights Commission Act, etc. are based on the Constitution's provisions on rights to equality, and the laws that requires companies to prohibit discrimination against women.

The Equal Employment Act has many regulations that prohibit gender discrimination in employment relations. There are penalties for discrimination on the grounds of maternity leave, childcare leave, and childcare reduced working hours, The Equal Employment Act stipulates that the employer has the obligation to prohibit sexual harassment. As such, the laws and systems prohibiting sexual discrimination can be seen to be well maintained.2

2. Glass Ceiling of Korean Companies

According to statistics from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2021, gender discrimination in companies still exists. Statistics show that women's participation in the labor market has increased quantitatively, but among 2,246 listed companies, the proportion of female executives is 5.2%, and 63.7% of companies has no registered female executives. Compared to the average ratio of female executives in the OECD countries, the ratio of women in high-ranking positions in Korea is very low, proving that the glass ceiling is very strong.

The glass ceiling may be caused by many factors, but the most important reasons are the male-based personnel evaluation and work practices, stereotypes about gender roles, and the fact women's life cycle can be different from men due to childbirth and childcare.

3. ESG and Corporate Change

The ratio of female executives is an indicator of how the core power and resources of a company are distributed and how much gender gap there is. The Capital Markets Act was revised in 2020 to solve the problem of glass ceilings by which the proportion of female executives was

significantly low in companies. So listed companies with a capital of more than 2 trillion won cannot have all of the board directors from a specific gender.

They are meaningful as a result achieved through the efforts of many women.

According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the proportion of female executives among companies subject to the above law was 5.7%, an increase of 1.2% from previous year. As such, listed companies have been making considerable efforts to find female executives this year, and the number is expected to increase steadily.3

Due to the lack of sensitivity to diversity, equality, and inclusion, which affects a company's long-term performance and leads to weakening of competitiveness, investors consider the ratio of female executives as an important indicator in ESG evaluation. Since 2021, when ESG management became an important keyword, companies have been striving to increase the proportion of female executives as an indicator of diversity and equality, an important item in ESG evaluation.

Companies are making efforts to introduce flexible work systems, operate workplace childcare facilities, expand maternity leave and childcare leave, encourage men to take paternity leave, prepare women's leadership programs, or operate communication programs to understand the other gender’s position in order to narrow the gender gap.

This movement is mainly seen in large companies that need to consider ESG investment. However, the reality is that it is difficult to expect in informal labor fields and small businesses where many women are employed. However, it is expected that if a corporate culture that respects, embraces, and gives fair opportunities to diversity is established through the attempts of large corporations, which in the long run will have a positive impact on society and culture as a whole.

4. Conclusion

To realize the rights to equal rights of the Constitution, the state is making efforts to create laws such as the Equal Employment Act that prohibit and punish gender discrimination, and to increase the proportion of female executives by revising the Capital Markets Act which can lead to the dismantling of the glass ceiling.

However, enforcement through law alone has limitations in realizing gender equality in companies. ESG is a means of encouraging companies to make voluntary efforts toward equality and diversity in terms of investment, not coercion by state and law. In this respect, investment and management changes for the purpose of ESG can be a meaningful and effective means of realizing gender equality in companies.

Since ESG investment principles consider equality and diversity as an important evaluation factor regarding ‘sustainable development,’ it seems that companies now feel the need to take a step further and make efforts to create an HR system, corporate practice and culture that take into account equality and diversity, moving away from a passive attitude of the past in which they

only focus on not violating the law. In this respect, there is clearly a positive function aspect of ESG on gender equality in the enterprise.

Conscription and Social Inequalities in South Korea: Intersectionality beyond gender inequality

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In April, 2021, the Citizens' Petitions (*kungmincheongwon*)[9] home page of the Blue House, Presidential Office and Residence then, was fired up with rapidly growing requests to conscript women just like men. Since this issue was registered on April 16th, it had attracted over 200,000 signatures in four days (Son, 2021). Curiously, this was not the first time that Korean "netizens," referring to those who actively use the internet for activism as well as socializing and entertainment, vociferously expressed their support for women's conscription in the name of gender equality for men. Since the establishment of the Citizens' Petition home page in 2017 (by Moon Jae-in's administration), the issue has periodically reappeared. In September 2017, it quickly attracted 100,000 supporters (Jeong, 2021). During 2020 alone, eleven petitions targeted the issue of women's conscription (Kim, 2021a). In the context of upcoming Presidential election in 2022 and other major elections in the spring of 2021, some leading or ambitious politicians tried to capitalize on this highly charged issue.

By approaching conscription as a key mechanism to establish and maintain the relationship between the state (institution of ruling) and its citizens, who are differentiated by various social structures of inequalities, this article focuses on recurring controversies over male-only conscription in South Korea since the 1990s. Specifically, it investigates why and how the issue was framed in the language of gender inequality against men and women's conscription presumably as a remedy. Is the system of male-only conscription solely or primarily a matter of gender equality/inequality? What does the recurring agitation over women's conscription reveal about other forms of inequalities, such as social class and disability, in South Korea? Why and how did conscription become so controversial after it has been accepted as men's duty for the divided nation and a rite of passage into adulthood? To address these questions, first, I will discuss how conscription began in South Korea and how it had become accepted by men and women as men's duty to the nation and a masculine rite of passage into adulthood. Then, I will discuss the complex intertwining of socioeconomic and political issues that contributed to the gendered framing of conscription controversies. Through the examination of gendered controversies over conscription from 1999 to 2022 against the backdrop of neoliberal transformation of the society, this paper argues that these controversies reveal ongoing negotiation and contestation over the contradiction between the democratic ideal of equality and the reality of multiple layers of social inequality, not just gender inequality. In other words, the high visibility of gender in conscription controversies obscures other equally serious inequalities

[9] The transliteration of Korean words in this paper follows the Revised Romanization of Korean that replaces the McCune-Reischauer system except for a word whose orthography is publicly known.

based on socioeconomic status (or class), race/ethnicity, and disability. Due to limited space, this article will focus on socioeconomic status.

(1) Men's conscription: its concise history and recurring contention

South Korea enacted the Military Service Law in 1949 but it was not until 1957 that it began to implement male-only conscription as an integral part of building a massive standing army in the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-1953). "Transnational militarism" between the United States and South Korea was central to this development in the context of the Cold War (Moon, 2021). Under the "Agreed Minute of Understanding" formulated during the 1954 summit meeting between the two countries, the US designed the Korean military to be dominated by the army and the gigantic army was to be manned primarily through male conscription (Moon, 2005b).[10] As I discussed elsewhere in extensive details, it took over a decade for the South Korean state to improve its technology of ruling in order to adequately implement male-only conscription (Moon, 2005a). In particular, it took multiple and relentless efforts of the military regime (controlled by Park Chung Hee) to establish a mechanism to monitor the entire body of its populace and mechanisms to reward those who complied and punish those who did not. The former mechanism was based on the system of resident registration (tied to the national ID card system) and the latter mechanisms included the following arrangements: the Military Service Extra-Points System (*gungasanjeomje*), the use of military service completion as a prerequisite for all forms of employments, including self-employment (*byeongyeokpil*), among men, and imprisonment for noncompliance. The use of these mechanisms was complemented by the ideological indoctrination of anticommunism and militarized official nationalism through formal schooling and informal socialization via the mass media (Moon, 1997; Moon, 2005a). Consequently, by the end of the 1970s, mandatory military service became firmly established as men's duty for the nation especially in the divided country whose civil war against North Korea has never formally ended. The timing of military service in men's life cycle, in association with making military service completion as the precondition for men's paid employment, also turned it into an important rite of passage into adulthood for young men. Such perception of military service was widely accepted by both men and women in the 1980s (Moon, 2001).

However, the development of democracy movements against military dictatorship, which promoted anticommunism and anti-labor capitalist development, generated space for questioning the hegemonic view of conscription as such. In particular, the transition to procedural democracy and civilian rule in the 1990s, the decade of democratization, enabled the rise of progressive social groups and organizations through the use of restored civil rights and they were able to

[10] In accordance with the Constitution which specifies all citizens' duty to perform national defense, the Military Service Law mentions that women can serve in the military but they are not required to. All women soldiers in Korea have been professional (commissioned or non-commissioned) officers as opposed to rank-and-file soldiers (Moon 2005a, 69).

articulate views alternative and critical to the hegemony. President Kim Young Sam (r. 1993-1997), the first civilian president in three decades, launched an ambitious project to root out the legacies of repressive military rule in public administration and the larger society. This lead from the top further facilitated the proliferation of both popular and official discourses addressing problems with conscription in particular and military reforms in general, which had been taboo topics under the military rule.

In this shifting sociopolitical context, in 1999, a lawsuit against the extra-points system was filed with the Constitutional Court, by a group of women (five female students at Ewha Womans University) and a man with disability. The Court ruled that the 37-year-old legal practice to grant (conscripted or professional) veterans extra points in certain public employment tests was 'unconstitutional" and "discriminatory" against women and disabled men, who were categorically exempted/excluded from military service (Moon, 2002b). By framing the extra-points system as such, the ruling opened a flood gate to the recurring contestation over male-only conscription not only in terms of equality between women and men, but also in terms of **equality in conscription among men** and even **the constitutionality of conscription** in a democratic society. The ruling was the single most significant event that galvanized some men to contest constitutionality of the conscription system ironically in the name of gender equality for men. Groups of men filed lawsuits with the Constitutional Court but it repeatedly rejected the claim of discrimination against men in the male-only conscription in 2010, 2011, and 2014 (Kim, 2021c). During their election campaigns, some politicians promised to revive the extra points system to recognize men's sacrifice in conscription and other politicians proposed for women's conscription.[11]

Meanwhile, as discussed below, the conscription system has been persistently embroiled by unequal practices among men, ranging from exemption to less strenuous forms of services among sons of wealthy and privileged families as well as celebrities in entertainment industry (that is, high-social-status groups). Yet these fundamental problems were often obscured by politicians and the mass media that took advantage of the political expediency of mobilizing voters with sensationalized issue of the contestation between women and men. In the following section, I will address why and how the conscription controversy was framed solely or primarily as an issue of gender inequality/equality.

[11] National Assembly member Yong-jin Pak published a book in 2021 after declaring his plan to run for presidency in 2022. In the book, he proposed to replace conscription with all-volunteer-professional military service and introduce mandatory basic military training for men and women to prepare them for reserve service. Other politicians of the Democratic Party, the ruling party then, also proposed preferential treatment of veterans in recognition of their military service in order to attract votes from young men (Sin, 2021).

(2) Gender framing of contentious conscription in neoliberal South Korea: the pervasive problem of employment insecurity and increasing competition for secure employment

At first glance, the male-only conscription system does dichotomize women and men as two distinct social groups, who have different relationship to the state, and therefore makes it a matter of gender. Even in the U.S., which replaced conscription with all-volunteer professional service in 1973, there has been the Selective Service System (SSS), which requires under Federal Law "nearly all male US citizens and male immigrants 18 through 25, register with Selective Service." In return, the US state provides the registered young men with eligibility "for jobs, state-based student aid in 31 states, Federally-funded job training, and U.S. citizenship for immigrant men".[12] The examples of South Korea and the U.S. show the common and enduring gender dichotomy in actual or potential mandatory military service and highlight the conscription system as a key political mechanism of constructing and maintaining dichotomous gender difference and commonly gender hierarchy.[13] At the same time women's conscription does not necessarily mean a high-level of gender equality, either. As recently as in 2021, among 164 countries with standing armed forces, 75 of them have a conscription system; 12 among 75 countries, including Chad, Eritrea, Israel, Mozambique, North Korea, Norway, and Sweden, have a conscription system for both men and women (Central Intelligence Agency, 2021; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2022). Given vast differences among these countries in terms of history, political culture, and economic development, the mere presence of gender-neutral conscription cannot be construed as a reflection of gender equality. The confluence of various socioeconomic and political factors would shape specific meanings and practices of conscription in a given society.

In the case of South Korea, such socioeconomic and political factors were epitomized by neoliberal restructuring of the economy and the transition to procedural democracy. As I discussed the political change above, which allowed for the emergence of contention over conscription, in this section I will focus on the socioeconomic change, which further affected the popular perception of the conscription system. We need to return to the 1999 Constitutional Court ruling against the extra-points system, which initiated the gender-framing of the controversy over conscription. What is noteworthy about the lawsuit and the subsequent elimination of the extra-points system is their timing; in 1999, South Korea was still recovering from the economic onslaught of the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, which resulted in the

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[12] In the homepage of the Selective Service System (SSS), the following statements are communicated: "While there is currently no draft, registration with the Selective Service System is the most publicly visible program during peacetime that ensures operational readiness in a fair and equitable manner. If authorized by the President and Congress, our Agency would rapidly provide personnel to the Department of Defense while at the same time providing an Alternative Service Program for conscientious objectors (Selective Service System, 2022)."

[13] Elsewhere I discussed the experience of gender inequality among professional women soldiers in South Korea by using in-depth interviews with commissioned and non-commissioned officers (Moon, 2002a).

massive loss of employment among millions of Koreans. As the first major economic crisis in its history of rapid economic growth since the 1960s, the crisis caused sudden impoverishment, family breakdown, and desperation leading to suicides at an alarming rate. The IMF "rescue package" that South Korea received resulted in the accelerated neoliberal restructuring of the economy, which destroyed employment security in the name of "flexible labor regime" that was supposed to make the Korean economy "competitive" in the world (Yoon, 2019). In the face of permanently precarious job market, public employment became more desirable and hence more individuals competed fiercely for limited public employment positions. Moreover, the younger-generation women with more education than their older counterparts in neoliberal Korea became more interested in pursuing secure employment. It was in this context that 5 to 10 % of extra points in certain public employment tests turned out to be a significant factor determining individual access to it as a highly coveted resource.[14] The lawsuit against the extra-points system and the Constitutional Court's ruling against it reflected progressive support for women and disabled men as social minorities by removing a barrier to their access to growingly competitive public employment opportunities. In contrast, many men who had to perform military service for over two years (back then) viewed it as unfair removal of symbolic recognition and a modicum of compensation for compulsory military labor especially in the context of neoliberal economy.

The neoliberal transformation of Korean society, beyond the economic restructuring, has also undermined the hegemony of conscription as men's duty to the nation. This notion of duty for the nation, a imagined political community, sits profoundly at odds with the neoliberal society, dominated by the market as a model to organize almost all areas of human lives, including education, health care, romance and marriage, and even religion. The society has promoted and even celebrated individuals' choice based on their ability to pay for what they need and want. The idea of mandatory military labor as duty and therefore national service was acceptable for young men and their families, when rapidly expanding economy in the past guaranteed ample opportunities for secure or at least decent jobs for men. When the state could not do so any more and individuals have struggled to find decent jobs, the rhetoric of duty to the nation became hollow. As discussed below men's resentment for *mandatory* (read as virtually free in the neoliberal society) military labor became intensified by pervasive and persistent practices of unequal burden of military service among able-bodied men in South Korea. This inequality has been profoundly tied to hierarchical differentiation among men in terms of socioeconomic status. Yet instead of focusing on this underlying problem, many men rechanneled their visceral anger and frustration to women who were social minorities especially *vis-à-vis* the state and political elite who have upheld the conscription system. Precisely speaking, the underlying issue with the conscription controversy was not so much gender

[14] In 1998, for example, a seventh-class state employee test showed a striking result that only 6% of those who passed the test did not receive the extra points system and thereby revealed its significance as a determining factor in such public employment tests. In response to recurrence of similar results in public employment tests, the Ministry of Public Administration decided to eliminate the extra-points system (Kim, 2017).

inequality/equality, as the issue between those who completed military service and those who did not or could not. Despite the symbolic presence of a man with disability in the 1999 constitutional lawsuit, this marginalized social group was conveniently erased because their difference (and "deviation") from the normative masculinity of able-bodied men who could perform military service. In response to the elimination of the extra-points system, conscripted men tended to direct their anger at women, rather than targeting the primary source of their subjection to compulsory military labor, that is, the state and powerful political elite. While women as a social group did not create the male-only conscription, they have occupied the ambiguous position of beneficiaries of the exemption from military service and simultaneously the excluded from formal and informal benefits tied to it. Unmistakably, the gender framing of conscription controversy around women's conscription reflected a social psychological dynamic of "the identification with aggressors" and blaming the weak, in this case women, as a scapegoat to appease their anger and frustration.

(3) Universal male conscription in principle vs. unequal practices of conscription: Hierarchy among men tied to socioeconomic status

Universal male conscription in principle assumes that all able-bodied men will equally perform military service. While such conscription system intends to treat men as a homogeneous group, in practice, it subjects them to differential treatments in connection to not only social class, but also race/ethnicity and sexuality. Historically and comparatively speaking, all countries with a conscription system have shown unequal practices of conscription among men to varying degrees (Flynn, 1998). South Korean military has excluded the following categories of men from conscription: those of mixed race who do not appear to be "typical" Koreans or those who are sexual minorities (Kim, 2021b). Because these men have also represented numerical minorities, they have rendered invisible until very recently. The problem of equity in conscription in South Korea have been amplified along socioeconomic status, which has affected a numerical majority of men. The persistent and pervasive presence of this inequity has existed at the heart of the visceral resentment among many Korean men who completed military service in neoliberal Korea. In other words, many ordinary men, who have no other choice but to complete regular military service are viscerally resentful not so much because women do not perform mandatory military service as because sons of privileged families and elite men themselves have disproportionately relieved from regular military service. As discussed below, this underlying inequity remain the single most salient source of contention over conscription, despite shifting perception of women's conscription among the younger-generation men and women.[15]

[15] A 2019 national survey on popular perception of military service conducted by the Korea Women's Development Institute showed that a majority of women respondents in their 20s (55%) and 30s (54%) agreed that "women also need to serve in the military" [Yojado kundae'e kaya"] (Ryu, 2021; Korea Women's Development Institute, 2019).

In contrast to the uniform image of military service, practices of military service on the ground have been quite complicated as reflected by different categories of military service in South Korea; 1) regular military service (*hyeonyeok*), 2) supplementary military service (*bochungyeok*), 3) military service special cases (*byeongyeokteungye*) and 4) KATUSAs (Korean Augmentation Troops to the US Army). The regular service refers to what civilians commonly think about military service, which means living in military barracks away from home and being trained for combat and combat-supporting activities. While specific terms referring to supplementary service have changed over time, this service has been marked by commuting from one's home to various military service sites, ranging from local military units to public offices. It has been also characterized by a shorter period of service than the regular service and mostly office work, rather than the military labor.[16] Established in 1973, the military service special cases referred to paid employment in strategic heavy industry in lieu of military service after an initial period of basic military training (Moon 2005b, chapter 2). This form of service required special technical skills or engineering expertise for paid employment and longer period of service than regular military service. As I examined in extensive details elsewhere, this category of service was instrumental to the heavy industrialization of South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s but its economic benefits declined over time due to economic and political changes in the Korean society (Moon 2005b, chapter 2, chapter 4). The KATUSAs refer to Korean conscripts serving in the US military bases in South Korea as integral part of the US Army. Created haphazardly in the beginning of the Korean War in order to solve the dire problem of manpower shortage, this ambiguous military service has crossed the national boundary between South Korea and the U.S. and reflects the military practice of colonial empires using colonized local people to run their militaries cheaply.[17] Yet Korean conscripts have preferred KATUSA positions to all other forms of military service because they serve in US military bases with better facilities and more individual freedom, especially more time to prepare for work and study after military service. Additionally, they can take advantage of opportunities to speak and learn English, which has become excessively valuable cultural capital in the era of neoliberal globalization. While the total number of KATUSAs has decreased over time to a few thousands, strong preference for it among Korean conscripts has not.

In the 1990s, prior to the rise of conscription controversies discussed above, some 200,000 new conscripts were annually sent to the military, which maintained roughly 600,000

[16] The length of mandatory military service has been shortened over time. In 2021, it was 18 months in the Army, 20 months in the Navy, and 22 months in the Air Force.

[17] During the Korean War, an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 Korean men were drafted to serve as KATUSAs. During the immediate postwar decade, their number hovered around 15,000 and in the following decades their number continued to decline. In 1987, some 4,000 conscripts served as KATUSAs (Moon 2010, 236, 237). Since the 1990s, there has been a few thousand KATUSAs in any given year (Moon, 2010).

troops.[18] Among those new conscripts, approximately 50 to 60 percent performed regular military service. This means that between 40 and 50 percent of the total cohort of recruits served in other forms of military service or received exemption. Roughly 30 percent of the annual cohort of recruits performed supplementary service and about 10 percent of the cohort performed military service special cases. Approximately 7 to 8 percent of the cohort received exemption from military service on economic, educational, medical, penal, and racial grounds (Moon 2005a, 73). While these percentages of different categories of military service have fluctuated over time, in conjunction with the demographic change in the total pool of able-bodied young men, the presence of these different forms of military service has virtually undermined the principle of universal male conscription. From the point of view of the Korean military, whose core concern is to maintain an optimum size of the military with well-trained soldiers, the presence of these different forms of service is desirable as a mechanism to cope with temporal demographic fluctuation. However, from the point of view of individual men, their presence tied to unequal military service has been the underlying source of inequity in apparently universal military service. For the past two decades, democratization allowed for the mass media to report numerous cases of military service irregularities among political and cultural elites by exposing military service records of presidential candidates, government ministers, and members of the National Assembly, as well as celebrities and sons of *chaebol* families. Sons of affluent or high-status families have disproportionately ended up performing less onerous service or obtained exemption altogether by using loopholes, money, and social connections (Kim, 2022; Yi, 2016).[19] These exposures confirmed not only that their sons in the present do not bear the equal burden of conscription, but also they themselves did not. The universal male conscription means in practice only those who are poor, powerless, and little social connections end up performing regular military service and this has generated intense feeling of relative deprivation and frustration among ordinary families and their sons.[20]

(4) Obscuring progressive challenges to conscription

The framing of conscription controversies solely or primarily as a matter of gender inequality/equality obscured important social movements that highlighted a deeper question of legitimacy of mandatory military service in a democratic society: 1) grassroots movement to

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[18] The number has decreased to 550,000 in 2021 but South Korea maintains the 7th largest military in the world (Kim, 2021b).

[19] Confirmation hearings of candidates for high-ranking government positions have shown numerous examples of "preferential treatment" of their sons whenever a new government has been formed after a Presidential election (Kim, 2022). Military service exemption among high-ranking public officials was 33 times as high as that among ordinary citizens (Yi, 2016)!

[20] Responding to this persistent problem, the Ministry of Military Manpower Administration (MMA) established in 2015 a website that collects the list of conscription evaders and identify them publicly after reviewing their cases. It has operated an online site where citizens are encouraged to report such evaders (Ministry of Military Manpower Administration, 2022).

question conscription in general and 2) grassroots movement of conscientious objectors in particular. The first movement began as "a gathering of those who oppose to the conscription system" (*Jingbanmo*)[21] and developed into "the National Solidarity to Promote the Voluntary Military Service System" (*mobyeongjechujingungminyeondae*: abbreviated as *mochuyeon*) in 2002. This movement continues with the forming of "Citizens United for the Promotion of the Voluntary Military Service" in 2020 (모병제추진시민연대 (Citizens' Coalition for Enlistment), 2022). The underlying idea of this movement has been that mandatory military service is not compatible with a democratic society where individual rights and freedom are valued. Its primary goal of eliminating conscription has faced deeply entrenched militarism in Korean society, coupled with astronomical costs of such change and vested interests in the current military system.[22] The vested interests have included resistance from high-ranking military officers whose number has been based on the size of rank-and-file soldiers whom they have to lead; hence the reduction of military manpower, to be caused by the transition to professional volunteer forces, will decrease the number of generals and other senior officers, who have enjoyed generous retirement benefits and other perks in their public employment especially against the backdrop of neoliberal transformation of the economy.

The second movement of conscientious objectors to conscription also developed as a matter of human rights in democratic society since the early 2000s with the emergence of the concept of "conscientious objection to mandatory military service (*yangsimjeok byeongyeokkeobu*) in the progressive mass media. For decades, the Military Service Law of South Korea did not recognize this concept and has imprisoned conscientious objectors for their violation of the law.[23] According to the Amnesty International, since 1953 the country has imprisoned more than 19,300 conscientious objectors, which was larger than the rest of the world combined (Quachkenbush, 2018).[24] In early 2001, a judge at a local court in Seoul galvanized a public debate on the issue by interpreting the Military Service Law as "unconstitutional." On November 26, 2001, the first day of the newly formed State Council for Human Rights (kukka inkwonwiwonhoe), a group of families whose sons were imprisoned as conscientious objectors submitted a collective petition to the Council. In early 2002, the Seoul local court asked the Constitutional Court to determine the unconstitutionality of the Military Service Law. In July

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[21] See http://www.anticonscription.org (accessed on 11/16/2022).

[22] In 2009, in the context of emerging demographic decline of young men eligible for military service, the Ministry of Defense explored a possibility to use women as rank-and-file soldiers, rather than exclusively as professional military officers. Yet the Ministry stopped the study in the midst of revived controversy over the eliminated extra-points system and women's conscription (Jeong, 2021).

[23] The length of prison sentence has fluctuated over time, from 5 to 6 years during the 1960s and 1970s to 2 years during the 1980s, and 3 years in the 1990s. It was reduced to 1.5 years in the 2010s (World without War 2014, 9).

[24] Initially, a majority of conscientious objectors were members of the Jehovah's Witnesses but their background expanded to Buddhists and nonreligious pacifists (Hankyoreh, 2022; Guzman, 2022; World without War, 2014). In 2014, as conscientious objectors became more globally recognized, incarcerated conscientious objectors in South Korea represented almost 90% of such objectors in the world (World without War, 2014).

2002, the National Assembly and a civic organization cosponsored a public hearing concerning the legislation of the alternatives to military service for conscientious objectors. In March 2003, an international conference on this topic was organized in Seoul, inviting activists and scholars from abroad. Instrumental to this series of developments was the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' declaration, in 2002 and 1998, that conscientious objection to military service was "a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." Responding to these developments, both criminal courts and military courts reduced the length of prison sentences given to conscientious objectors in the early 2000s (Moon 2005a, 76, 77).

However, conservative resistance to conscientious objectors has been strong in South Korea whose pursuit of modernity was closely intertwined with the use of male-only conscription (Moon 2005b). In 2022, conscientious objectors are given "alternative service" (*daechebyeongyeok*) which requires them to work in the country's prison system. They typically perform prison laundry washing, kitchen work, and occasionally administrative tasks for 36 months, which is twice as long as the length of regular military service. Although granted an annual leave for a few weeks, they are required to live in the facilities where their mobility is monitored and constrained. Consequently, there is little substantial difference between imprisonment in earlier decades and this "alternative service" (Guzman, 2022).

By raising fundamental questions about conscription in democratized South Korea, these social movements enable us to understand that to approach conscription as solely or primarily a matter of gender equality/inequality obscures what is at stake in the contention over conscription. Although not yet resulted in ending conscription, these movement broadened and deepened how to think about conscription and weakened the hard grip of hegemonic idea of conscription as men's duty to the nation and a masculine rite of passage into adulthood. This shifting perception of military service is well reflected in a series of national surveys (Yun, 2019). According to national surveys of changing gender role perceptions conducted the Korea Women's Development Institute (2019), a majority of men in their 20s showed negative attitude toward conscription, in comparison with their older counterparts. These younger men replied that it is better not to serve in the military, if possible (82.6%), military service involves more loss than gain (73.5%), and it is waste of time (68.2%). They also replied that male-only conscription is a discrimination (72.2%) and women should serve in the military (64.7%).

Conclusion

This article has examined why and how the recurring controversy over male-only conscription has been framed almost exclusively as an issue of gender inequality/equality. By paying attention to the larger social context of economic and political changes in South Korean society since the 1990s, it illuminates how the one-dimensional focus on gender obscured deeper and complex issues tied to other forms of social inequality, particularly socioeconomic status leading to the hierarchy among men. While gender inequality against women persists in labor

market, formal politics, and cultural representation (especially in positions tied to immense wealth, political power, and recognition/prestige), gender as a structure of social inequality always interacts with other forms of social inequality and we need to be vigilant about understanding the intersectionality among these forms of inequalities. In the neoliberal South Korea, these structural inequalities are reduced to individual choices, capacities, and luck and to be dealt with through the purchase of commodified goods and services. In order to revive the shared sense of duty for a nation or any other type of collective community, which are essential to human existence, the political and economic elites ruling the populace have to provide them with basic and substantial economic and social securities. Various social groups need to demand these elites to do so by using multiple mechanisms in society.

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Attitudes Towards Gender Egalitarianism and Marriage Desires in South Korea

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Abstract

Gender theories in family demography posit that progress toward gender egalitarianism is essential in shaping family behaviors leading to "more" or "strengthening" family (e.g., higher fertility and marital stability). Using data from the 2018 Korean National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare, this study investigates the association between egalitarian gender-role attitudes and marriage desires among never-married adults in South Korea. The results suggest a mixed relationship between egalitarian gender-role attitudes and marriage desires. The key area for change to strengthening family is to ease dilemmas single women and men confront, choosing one over the other, between family and work. Another area would be enabling dual-earner families to manage work-family balance especially when the couples have pre-school-age children.

Background

Sociological theories of family developed since 2000 posit that gender relations play an important role in explaining sustained low fertility and family demography in economically advanced countries. While each theory's primary focus differs, several sociologists posited theories to address issues of gender relations and their implications for family behaviors, including marriage and fertility (Billari and Esping-Andersen, 2015; Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Lappegård, 2015; McDonald, 2000). Drawing upon these theories, several previous studies examining the case of South Korea support the link between gender inequality and low fertility (Kan and Hertog, 2017; Kim, 2017; Yoon, 2016). Moreover, these previous studies urge policymakers to implement policies and programs that could support maintaining work-family balance for families and building a family-friendly work environment in the workplace. As such, the importance of achieving progress toward gender egalitarianism in relation to family behavior has received much attention not only from scholars but also from policymakers, as very low fertility rates in South Korea have been one of the pressing concerns of the government. However, unfortunately, fertility rates in South Korea have not been increasing. Instead, it went further down to the total fertility rate of 0.8 (The World Bank, 2021).

One of the primary factors driving very low fertility in Korea is the decline in marriage because of a close connectedness between marriage and fertility. The proportion of adults aged 45 or below staying never-married has been increasing. Figure E.8 presents the proportion of men and women who remained never-married in 2010 and 2020. As expected, the proportion of men and women who remain never-married decreased for older adults. Over the past ten years, the proportion of adults who remain never-married has increased for both men and women. For

men between 30 and 34, the percentage was 50 percent in 2010 and went up to 68 percent in 2020. The percentage of never-married men was higher in Seoul, indicating that over 70 percent of men aged 30-34 in Seoul was never married. The never-married percentage substantially drops for men aged between 35 and 39 to below 50 percent for men living in Seoul and below 40 percent for men in general.

Women showed lower proportion of never-married than their male counterparts for all 5-year age groups. Similar to men's patterns, the percentage of never-married women went up from 2010 to 2020. For those aged between 30 and 34, about 30 percent of women remained never-married, but the percentage increased to 49 percent in 2020. The percentage of women staying never-married was even higher for Seoul residents, at 60 percent. As observed in men's patterns, the percentage of never-married people decrease substantially from the 30-34 age group to the 35-39 age group. The gap in the percentage of never-married between the national average and Seoul residents was higher for women than for men. By age 44, about a quarter of women who live in Seoul were never-married.

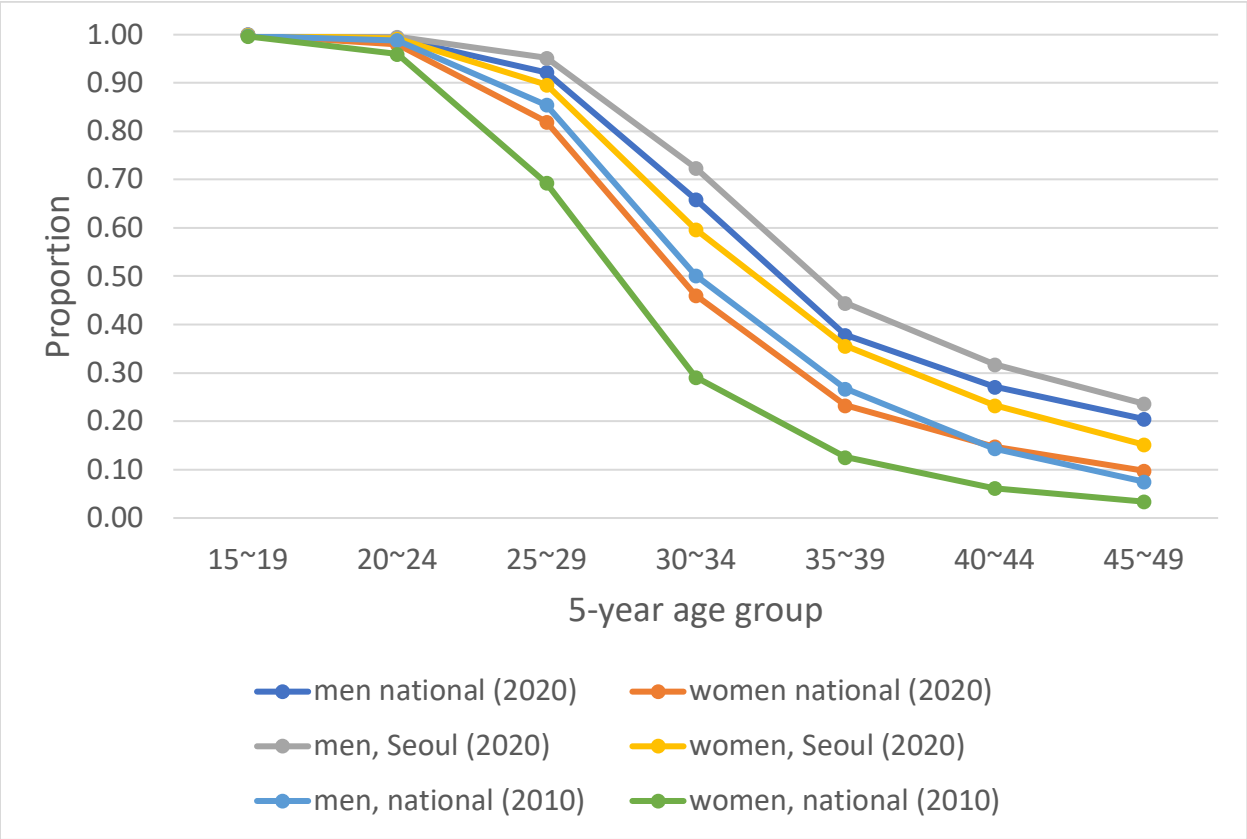
A retreat from marriage is not unique in Korea. Instead, it is prevalent in other industrialized countries. The second demographic transition theory (SDT) posits a retreat from marriage and sustained low fertility in industrialized Western countries (Lesthaeghe, 2010). The SDT states that ideational and cultural shifts lead to changes in family behavior, such as alternative family arrangements other than marriage, because people prioritize individualization and self-development, citing Maslow's "higher-order needs"(Lesthaeghe, 2010; Maslow, 1954). Marriage is a choice people make out of competing interests, such as other individual achievements. In contrast, Goldscheider and colleagues (2015) contend that the negative aspects of family outcomes (e.g., marital instability, low fertility) that the SDT emphasizes reflect the early stages of the gender revolution, which strains family behaviors, leading to weakened families. Similarly, Esping-Andersen and Billari (2015) posit that achieving gender egalitarianism as dominant gender relations leads to "more family." Esping-Andersen and Billari (2015) suggest a U-shaped pattern of gender revolution in which low fertility and marital instability are most prevalent when society has not yet stepped toward gender egalitarianism. The gender revolution framework suggests that the structural changes in the family gender relationship due to increased female labor force participation are responsible for lower fertility and lower family stability (Goldscheider et al., 2015: 211). Increased labor force participation added a second shift for women by taking care of paid work and family responsibilities during the first half of the gender revolution. The second half of the gender revolution concerns increased men's involvement in the family, ultimately leading to strengthening families.

These theories emphasize the role of progress toward gender egalitarianism, especially enabling women to achieve work-family balance, in strengthening family or more family. Thus, compared to people who think it is ideal for women to keep working and getting married and having children (balancing work and family), never-married adults who prioritize women's paid work and career prospects over family formation are likely to report lower marriage desires. It

would be especially relevant for women. Similarly, never-married men who perceive challenges of managing work-family balance for women (or for dual-earner families in general) are also likely to report lower marriage desires. In contrast, never-married people who prioritize women's caregiving roles over career prospects (e.g., opting out of the labor force when she has a preschool child) are likely to report lower marriage desires as they perceive incompatibility between childrearing and women's employment. Moreover, never-married men and women who hold traditional gender role expectations within families (e.g., women's mother roles and women as supplementary bread earners) are more likely to report marriage desires.

Understanding how high levels of education among Korean adults are transferred to their perceived (in)compatibility of their labor force participation and marriage desires is still missing in the literature. To fill this gap, this paper examines the association between gender role attitudes and marriage desires as a measure of family behavior among never-married young adults. The desire to get married can be an important indicator of family behavior in a context where marriage and fertility go hand-in-hand, such as in South Korea (Raymo, Uchikoshi and Yoda, 2021). The level of nonmarital births in Korea remains at 1.9 percent, the lowest level among OECD countries (OECD, 2014). As presented in Figure E.8, increasing proportion of Korean adults stays never-married, leading to no children. Thus, marriage desires can be a significant indicator for never-married young adults, leading them to transition to first marriage and potentially childbearing.

Figure E.8. Proportion of Never-Married Adults by 5-year Age Group



Data Source: KOSIS. 2021. *Population statistics by age, sex, and marital status*. Korean Census. Each year.

Data and Methods

Sample

I use data from the 2018 Korean National Survey on Fertility, Family Health, and Welfare (KNSFFHW). The KNSFFHW is a repeated cross-sectional survey administered by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA). The KIHASA administers the KNSFFHW every three years. While the original focus of the survey was to collect information among married women in childbearing years (15-49 years old), the survey also includes a separate questionnaire for unmarried adults aged 20 and 44, asking about their behaviors and perceptions concerning marriage and childbirth. Samples are selected via a two-stage stratified sampling strategy borrowing the sampling framework provided by Statistics Korea (Lee, 2019). The survey was distributed to 12,000 households, 20% higher than the target, resulting in a response rate of at least 83 percent. The current study used data from the unmarried respondents of the survey. The sample included a total of 1,140 never-married men and 1,324 never-married women.

Measures

I measured *marriage desire* based on a single survey item that asked respondents whether or not they want to marry. The original survey item had four response options, including "I want to marry (at some point)," "I did before, but now I do not want to marry," "I did not want to marry before, nor I want to marry," "I have not thought about it," and "I don't know." I operationalized the marriage desire variable as a dummy variable, indicating those with clear marriage desires (i.e., I want to marry at some point) as 1 and all the other respondents as 0.

The primary independent variable in this study is gender role attitudes. I measure gender role attitudes using two measures. The first is a composite measure based on four survey items concerning gender role expectations within couples. The four items are as follows: 1) It is more important for a married woman to help her husband build his career than her own. 2) A husband's job is to earn money, and a wife's job is to take care of their family. 3) Mothers are better able to care for their children than fathers. 4) It is better for a woman to raise children on their own when the child is less than two years old. The responses were coded ranging from 1 to 4, with higher values indicating more egalitarian gender role attitudes. The Cronbach's alpha value for these four items was 0.78. I created a composite measure by taking the mean score from the four items. Women showed a higher mean (2.92) than men (2.73). Another variable concerning gender role attitudes relies on a single survey item that directly asks the respondents' attitudes toward women's ideal life balancing work and family responsibilities. There were six response options as follows:

Women keep working while not getting married.

Women keep working while getting married but having no child.

Women keep working while getting married and having a child.

Women opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and will return to work once her child is in school.

Women exit the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and will not return to work.

I don't know.

Nearly 50 percent of unmarried men responded that it is ideal for women to opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work when a child is in school. Another 30 percent of men responded that women keep working regardless of marriage and childbearing. Unmarried women's responses were in reverse order. Thirty-three percent of unmarried women said it is ideal for women to keep working while getting married and having children. Another 30 percent of women said it is ideal for women to opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work one their child is in school.

To understand the relationship between *socioeconomic status* and marriage desire, I use three measures, widely used in the literature. Educational attainment not only differentiates different levels of education but also distinguishes whether or not the respondents are in school. Educational attainment includes the following five categories: 1) high school or below, 2) attending a junior college, 3) graduated from a junior college, 4) attending a 4-year college or

above, and 5) graduated from a 4-year college or above. Employment status is a four-category measure: 1) regular/full-time, 2) irregular/part-time, 3) self-employed, and 4) not employed. I also control the region of residence using the following three categories: 1) large city, 2) small or medium-sized city, and 3) rural area.

There are a couple of control variables. I control the age group using five categories (less than 25 years old, 25-29 years old, 30-34 years old, 35-39 years old, and 40 years old or above). Lastly, I also control for whether or not a respondent lives alone. As prior research has emphasized the importance of living alone as a marker of adulthood, I control for the potential influence of living arrangements on marriage desires.

Table E.5 presents the key demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the sample. Nearly 60 percent of men reported that they wanted to marry, whereas less than 50 percent of women said they wanted to marry. More than a third of the respondents were in their early 20s, followed by 25-29 years old for both men (29%) and women (30%). Regarding education, about 30 percent of men held a college degree or above and 44 percent of women had a college degree or above. About 35 percent of men and 41 percent of women had full-time regular employment. A substantial proportion of men and women were not employed. Nearly 39 percent of men and 32 percent of women were not employed at the time of the survey. More men than women reported that they lived alone. Nearly half of the respondents resided in large cities, followed by small or medium-sized cities.

Table E.5. Descriptive Statistics

	Men (N=1,140)	Women (N=1,324)
Marriage Desires (Yes)	58.8	45.3
Gender role attitudes (mean)	2.73	2.92
Attitudes toward women's ideal life		
Keep working while not getting married	3.8	14.3
Keep working while getting married but having no child	6.2	12.8
Keep working while getting married and having a child	29.3	33.1
Opting out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work once her child is in school age	45.7	30.5
Opting out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and not return to work	3.3	3.0
Don't know	11.7	6.3
Age group		
Less than 25 years old	30.7	36.0
25-29 years old	28.6	30.1
30-34 years old	17.0	15.5
35-39 years old	13.4	11.2
40-44 years old	10.3	7.2

	Men (N=1,140)	Women (N=1,324)
Education		
High school or below	27.3	13.7
Attending 2-3yr college	4.0	1.9
Graduated 2-3yr college	14.5	20.7
Attending 4-yr college or above	23.1	19.8
Graduated 4-yr college or above	31.1	43.9
Employment status		
Regular/full-time	35.4	41.1
Irregular/part-time	20.4	21.3
Self-employed	5.7	5.4
Not employed	38.5	32.2
Living alone	24.0	15.6
Region of residence		
Large city	47.2	51.0
Small or medium sized city	38.2	37.6
Rural area	14.6	11.4

Results

Table E.6 displays the distribution of marriage desires of never-married men and women by attitudes toward women's ideal life concerning work-family balance. Bivariate crosstabulations suggest that marriage desires are related to attitudes toward women's ideal life for both men and women. The relationship is more pronounced for women. Men who think women should keep working without getting married nor having children reported lower marriage desires. About 68 percent of men who think that women should achieve both family and work goals (i.e., keep working regardless of marriage or childbearing) reported marriage desires. This group showed the highest marriage desires. Sixty-seven percent of men who think it would be better for women to opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work once their child is in school age also reported marriage desires. Surprisingly, only about 55 percent of men who hold the most traditional gender role attitudes (i.e., women should opt out of the labor force upon marriage or children) reported marriage desires.

Women's crosstabulation table also suggests a similar relationship between attitudes toward women's ideal life and marriage desires. As expected, only 5 percent of women who think women should keep working while not getting married reported marriage desires. Slightly higher than 30 percent of women who think that women should keep working while getting married but not having children reported marriage desires. Women who think it would be better for women to opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work once their child is in school age showed the highest level of marriage desires, 64 percent. Surprisingly, only 15

percent of women who said 'I don't know' to the question of women's ideal life reported marriage desires.

Table E.6. Marriage desires by attitudes toward women's ideal life concerning work-family responsibilities, percent

Marriage desires	Keep working while not getting married	Keep working while getting married but having no child	Keep working while getting married and having a child	Opting out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work once her child is in school age	Opting out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and not return to work	Don't know
Men (N=1,140), chi-square = 76.19 (p < .001)						
Yes	19.05	41.89	67.76	66.99	54.05	42.54
No	80.95	58.11	32.24	33.01	45.95	57.46
Women (N=1,324), chi-square = 242.73 (p < .001)						
Yes	5.85	30.86	56.81	63.79	52.63	15.48
No	94.15	69.14	43.19	36.21	47.37	84.52

Table E.7 presents the results of the logit regression models for marriage desires focusing on differences by gender-role attitudes and socioeconomic status. The gender-specific models were estimated since the link between gender-role attitudes, socioeconomic status and marriage desires can vary by gender, drawing upon theories on family behaviors. From the men's results, age was negatively associated with marriage desires. Education was not significantly associated with men's marriage desires. Compared to men with bachelor's degrees or above, the likelihood of marriage desires was not significantly lower for less educated men. In contrast, employment status was a significant factor associated with marriage desires for men. Men holding regular and full-time employment were significantly more likely to report marriage desires compared to not employed men. However, men holding other types of employment, such as irregular part-time work or self-employment, were not significantly different from the reference group regarding marriage desires. Men living in rural areas showed a significantly higher likelihood of marriage desires than men living in large cities. Age was associated with marriage desires. Interestingly, older men aged 35 or older were significantly less likely to report marriage desires than younger men aged 25 or below.

A composite measure of gender-role attitudes was marginally associated with men's marriage desires ($p < .10$). However, attitudes toward women's work-family compatibility were significantly related to men's marriage desires. Compared to men who idealize the compatibility between work and family for women, men who prioritize women's role as mothers (i.e., it would

be ideal for women to opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing) did not report significantly different marriage desires. However, men who prioritize women's career prospects (i.e., it would be ideal for women to keep working, either not getting married or not having a child) reported significantly lower marriage desires than those in the reference group.

Table E.7. Coefficients from a logit regression on marriage desires

	Men (N=1,140)		Women (N=1,324)	
	Coef. (S.E.)	Odds Ratio	Coef. (S.E.)	Odds Ratio
Age group (ref: less than 25 years old)				
25-29 years old	-.216 (.194)	.806	-.114 (.188)	.893
30-34 years old	-.280 (.249)	.756	-.591* (.234)	.554
35-39 years old	-.897** (.280)	.408	-1.247** (.281)	.287
40-44 years old	-.954** (.312)	.385	-1.553* (.345)	.212
Education (ref. 4-yr college graduate or above)				
High school or below	-.073 (.197)	.930	-.857*** (.219)	.424
Attending 2-3yr college	-.454 (.374)	.635	-1.035* (.430)	.355
Graduated 2-3yr college	.007 (.221)	1.007	-.542** (.186)	.582
Attending 4-yr college or above	.223 (.235)	1.250	-.466* (.219)	.628
Employment status (ref. Not employed)				
Regular/full-time	.679*** (.198)	1.972	.455* (.186)	1.577
Irregular/part-time	-.026 (.194)	.974	.187 (.196)	1.206
Self-employed	.499 (.349)	1.646	-.016 (.329)	.984
Living alone	.159 (.188)	1.172	.168 (.216)	1.182
Region of residence (ref. large city)				
Small or medium sized city	.118 (.149)	1.125	-.073 (.148)	.929
Rural area	.383* (.189)	1.467	.169 (.185)	1.184
Gender role attitudes (centered)	-.229 (.119)	.795	-.648*** (.119)	.523

	Men (N=1,140)		Women (N=1,324)	
	Coef. (S.E.)	Odds Ratio	Coef. (S.E.)	Odds Ratio
Attitudes toward women's ideal life (ref. Keep working while getting married and having a child)				
Keep working while not getting married	-2.000*** (.438)	.135	-2.956*** (.345)	.052
Keep working while getting married but having no child	-1.151*** (.290)	.316	-1.121*** (.211)	.326
Opting out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and return to work once her child is in school age	-.025 (.163)	.975	.220 (.161)	1.246
Opting out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing and not return to work	-.558 (.391)	.572	-.610 (.396)	.543
Don't know	-.967*** (.231)	.380	-1.791*** (.368)	.167
Constant	.550* (.266)	1.733	.779*** (.224)	2.178
Log-likelihood	-709.80		-720.03	

Women's marriage desires were related to their age. Compared to women under 25, women in their thirties or early forties reported significantly lower marriage desires. While education was not related to men's marriage desires, education was positively associated with women's marriage desires. Compared to women with bachelor's degrees or above, less educated women or those attending schools reported lower marriage desires. Women attending a junior college reported the lowest likelihood of marriage desires, followed by those with a high school diploma or below. Women with regular, full-time employment reported stronger marriage desires than not employed counterparts. Two other control variables, living arrangement and the region of residence, were not related to women's marriage desires.

A composite measure concerning gender role expectations within couples was significantly related to women's marriage desires. Women who hold more egalitarian gender-role expectations between couples reported lower marriage desires. As shown in the men's results, attitudes toward women's work-family compatibility were significantly related to women's marriage desires. Compared to women who idealize balance between women's career and family formation, women who prioritize women's role as mothers (i.e., it would be ideal for women to opt out of the labor force upon marriage or childbearing) did not report significantly different marriage desires. However, women who prioritize women's career prospects (i.e., it would be ideal for women to keep working, either not getting married or not having a child) reported significantly lower marriage desires than those in the reference group. Women who

reported ‘Don’t Know’ about the ideal situation for women to balance work and family formation also reported lower marriage desires than those in the reference group.

Discussion and Conclusions

The proportion of adults remaining never married has increased over time in Korea. In a society characterized by a close link between marriage and childbearing, this can be a primary factor leading to many changes in family behaviors, including low fertility. Relatively recent theories developed since 2000 emphasize the role of egalitarian gender relations in achieving “more family” (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015) or strengthening family (Goldscheider et al., 2015). However, empirical studies examining marriage desires have paid little attention to the role of gender-role attitudes, such as how perceived work-family incompatibility influences marriage desires among never-married men and women. To shed light on this missing piece in the literature, this study examined the association between gender-role attitudes and marriage desires among never-married men and women.

The results suggest that a substantially high percentage of never-married adults did not want to marry. About 60 percent of men and 45 percent of women reported marriage desires. Older men and women in their thirties and early forties reported lower marriage desires than people in their early twenties. My findings also suggest that marriage desires significantly vary by gender-role attitudes. Men who prioritized women’s careers over family formation reported lower marriage desires than those who thought keeping both family and work life was ideal for women. Similarly, the findings suggest a positive association between egalitarian gender-role attitudes (i.e., keeping both family and work life for women) and marriage desires for women. The association was stronger in women’s results than in men’s results. This pattern reflects the dominant gender relations in Korea, which is marked by incompatibility between work and family for women. The dominant gender relations expect women to participate in paid work. At the same time, people view women as supplementary earners of the households rather than equal dual-earners. The descriptive statistics showing that most never-married adults think that it is ideal for a woman to opt out of the labor force when she has a pre-school-age child also reflect the dominant gender relations. My analyses reinforce the importance of egalitarian gender relations in achieving “more family” (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015) and “strengthened family” (Goldscheider et al., 2015).

This study has several limitations. First, the sample is not free from selection bias (i.e., selection into singlehood), especially for those in their late thirties and early forties. The proportion of never-married adults in these age groups in the survey is relatively small (about 100 each). They may be different from the rest of the population. Second, given that this study relied on cross-sectional data, I cannot identify the causal relationship between gender-role attitudes and marriage desires. Future research utilizing longitudinal data showing various pathways of marriage desires and realization of marriage desires (see Raymo et al., 2021 for the case of Japan) would be insightful to understanding the trends of later and less marriage. Third,

there are potential factors influencing marriage desires. For example, the difficulty of finding marriable partners for women and economic insecurity for men was common reasons to remain single. It also might reflect less egalitarian gender relations at the societal level.

Despite these limitations, this study provides insight into the role of egalitarian gender relations in shaping marriage desires. Marriage desire is an important indicator of family behavior in societies characterized by a tight connectedness between marriage and fertility, and delayed, and less marriage is pronounced. The results suggest the positive association between egalitarian gender-role attitudes and marriage desires. The key area for change to strengthening family is to ease dilemmas single women and men confront, choosing one over the other, between family and work. Another area would be enabling dual-earner families to manage work-family balance, especially when the couples have pre-school-age children.

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