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NATIONAL NARRATIVES AND EVERYDAY SUBVERSIONS: KOREAN

WOMEN AND MILITARY MEN IN U.S. CAMPTOWNS

By

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Leela Fernandes

The objective of this dissertation is to explore the historical, material, and discursive realities of Korean women in the sex trade in U.S. camptowns.

With the use of political ethnography, I draw on a wide range of sources such as textual literature, films, first-hand qualitative interviews, and participant observation.

I make three major arguments: First, the existence of Amerasians and women in the sex trade in the camptowns has always been a polemic issue because it destabilizes the imagined and naturalized national identity which is constituted by the familial state and a biologically essentialist definition of race. In spite of the binary focus on nation and gender, two main strands of discourse -feminist rhetoric and nationalist narratives- have shared class based views on the women in the sex trade.

Second, contrasting the public's imaginations of the sex trade in terms of liaisons with

foreign nationals, the women's own narratives and life histories are centered on labor and reinhabitation (of the world). The construction of their life experiences demonstrates that 1) the practice of sex trade is not a question of sex but is on the continuum of other informal works; 2) being subject to victimization at one stage of their lives does not mean that their identities are permanently defined as victims. In re-narrating their lives and work experiences, this dissertation suggests an alternative view on the basis of such terms as "poisonous knowledge" and "abundance from hard labor." Third, the oppression of women is daily and intersectional/multiple. The act of speech is not identical to voice. Thus, the women often employ unlikely forms of subversions including silence and social distance on a daily basis rather than establishing an open and assertive form of resistance.

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Seonja Rhu, Youngbu Kim and my younger sister Eunjeong Kim.

### **A Note on Korean Language**

I have transliterated Korean words using The Revised Romanization of Korean. Exceptions are made for names whose personal orthography is publicly known.

### **A Note on Year**

Because most of the writing was done in 2008, all statements including interviewees' ages reflect that year.

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“The world’s oldest profession.” Most of the time, prostitution is casually, unthinkingly characterized this way. The effect is supposed to be at once euphemistic and humorous, a wry assertion that commercial sex is so long-established a practice that it constitutes the first known instance of exchange for value received... It is seen as deeply rooted because men’s need for sex, a thing with which women can supply them, is so powerful that it drove our long-ago ancestors to establish commerce itself to accommodate it. Notions of nature and human nature meld in this conception to suggest that anyone calling for change is at best quixotic, at worst fanatic.

Ryan Bishop and Lillian S. Robinson, *Night Market*, 1998

The particular ways in which race, migration, economics, and geography are used to construct the terrain of sexuality are partially a result of the contesting ideologies that compose national identity.

Stephanie Kane, “Prostitution and the Military,” 1993

Just as women drank the pain so that life could continue, so men longed for martyrdom by which they could invite the evil back upon themselves and humanize the enormous looming images of nation and sexuality; It (the coming to doubt of relationship that the Partition amplified in India) could be repaired only by allowing oneself a descent into the ordinary world but as if in mourning for it. Recovery did not lie in enacting a revenge against the world, but in inhabiting it in a gesture of mourning for it.

Veena Das, *Life and Words*, 2007

The technology of silence/The rituals, etiquette/The blurring of terms/Silence not absence/of words or music or even/raw sounds/Silence can be a plan/Rigorously executed/The blueprint to a life/It is a presence/It has a history a form/Do not confuse it/ With any kind of absence/How calm, how inoffensive these words/Begin to seem to me/ though begun in grief and anger/Can I break through this film of the abstract/Without wounding myself or you/There is enough pain here/This is way the classical or the jazz music station plays?/to give a ground of meaning to our pain?

Adrienne Rich, “Cartographies of Silence,” 1978

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1. Objectives and Review of Literature**

#### **1-1. Background and Objectives**

Since the mid 1990s, the sex trade around the U.S. military bases in the Republic of Korea (South Korea; hereafter Korea) has undergone a noticeable transformation. The globalization of the sex industry alongside “the transnationalization of labor” (Sassen 1998) has resulted in the replacement of Korean women in the sex trade with immigrant women from the Philippines and the former Soviet Union (Baek 1999, Cheng 2002, J. Lee 2002, Y. Oh 1998, Seol 2004, Yea 2004, 2005). Mass media, feminist academia and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) began focusing on female immigrants’ disadvantaged situations. These circumstances have been depicted through a deep-seated, binary image of women as either sex trafficking victims or materialistic women in conjunction with a methodology of static description. In the meantime, elderly Korean women involved in the sex industry within the camptowns have been represented as “(desexualized) lonely and poor grandmothers” as well as “political victims” of U.S. militarism and the Korean government. The latter acknowledgement of political victims was a relatively new term made possible by the powerful influence of political scientist Katharine Moon’s

Korean translation of *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (1997) in 2002. The Korean television broadcast *We Want to Know the Truth*, “Camptown Grandmother, Who Stigmatized Them?” which aired on October 21, 2006 on the Seoul Broadcasting Station (SBS), focused on the disadvantaged lives of elderly women. On the other hand, *We Can Speak Now*, “Sex Alliances - Camptowns,” which aired on February 9, 2003 on the Munwha (culture) Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), emphasized the Korean government’s determined role in the sex trade in the U.S. camptowns. The latter broadcast predominately presented Moon’s main argument (1997) which explored the systematic role of the Korean government in military prostitution around the 1970s.

Given the context of hegemonic Korean nationalist narratives and the usual humanistic appeal to the less privileged social groups, it is not surprising that sweeping characterizations such as poor grandmothers and political victims are made. While these characterizations are essentially connected to voyeurism and a patronizing tenor, there is little in-depth analysis of their lives. Even when the MBC broadcast mentioned the Korean government’s responsibility, by focusing on the government’s regulation of venereal diseases, there was little information or analysis about what really happened to the women or how they initiated their lives within the structural constraints. Thus, the new and powerful discussion of the overwhelming

and determined role of the Korean government in the sex trade around the U.S.

military camptowns tends to reinforce the powerless image of women in the sex trade.

As a determinant, political entity has replaced gendered poverty, cultural explanation, and individualized critiques while women's status of victim remains unchanged.

The sex trade in an international tourism framework and the militarized prostitution in Asian societies are some of the most controversial topics in feminist academia. These issues have been debated through (monolithic and) structural variables such as industrialization, development, and militarism (Bishop and Robinson 1998, Enloe 2000, W. Lee 1991, Rubin 1975, Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, Truong 1990). However the fundamental nature, or sensationalism and spectacle of the sex industry have been intact. One critical and essential reason for such a tendency is that although many Korean women involved in the sex industry have participated in other economic activities such as factory labor and domestic work before entering the sex trade, most studies do not consider working in the sex industry as "labor" (studies). That is, most studies have focused on the sex trade through the lens of "sex/sexuality" and have not acknowledged women's nuanced and complicated life experiences. Indeed, such tendencies end up reproducing patriarchal sexual norms by confirming the essentialist myth that the existence of a woman and her social identity are only determined by "sexuality." More representations of the

existence of women as discourses on suffering can impede rather than facilitate practical efforts to improve or change conditions within the industry. Similarly, recognition of the women in the sex industry in “Asian societies” is implicitly fixed as double victims of their own patriarchal society as well as the global political economy. Yet as Skeggs (1997) points out, “the representations of the women (young British working class women) were positioned by were not those of reality but autonomous and paradigmatic conceptual structures produced by others whose social and representational position was very different” (160).

The central questions I analyze in this dissertation are threefold: 1) How and why certain institutionalized knowledge on sex trade in U.S. camptowns has been continuously (re)produced? 2) The violence and discourse on women in the sex trade in the camptowns revolve around a nationalized body or an embodiment of poverty. How then do the women construct the subjectivity and recognize themselves? How do the women maneuver/inhabit the world? 3) How and why are boundaries between races, genders (sexual activity), and nations being operated and “naturalized” on the site of Korean women in the sex trade and their offspring, Amerasians,<sup>1</sup> in the

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<sup>1</sup> Amerasian is a term that was coined by Pearl S. Buck in her novel *East Wind, West Wind* (1930) to describe the union between a Chinese man and an American woman. It has been applied, more recently, to describe children of Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipina women fathered by American soldiers. Although there are other categories of Amerasians in Korea (Okazawa-Rey 1997), in this study, I am mainly concerned with people born in unions between American soldiers and Korean women around the military bases who have been abandoned by their fathers and reared by their Korean mothers or adopted and immigrated to the U.S. I use the term Amerasian rather than “twigi” (hybridness) or mixed blood people

camptowns?

The objective of this research is to explore the historical, material, and discursive realities of women in the sex trade (and their offspring) around the U.S. military camptowns in Korea. This study is neither intended to disclose their disadvantaged situations by simply describing the daily lives of the women in order to challenge the patriarchal oppression and U.S. militarism, nor is it a way to explore the global and structural aspects of the violence they have experienced by suggesting their narratives as “evidence” of the structural violence. Although these points would be part of this research, the ultimate aim is to analyze the deep political implications of the representation/discourse and the existence of women in the sex trade as well as Amerasians in relation to racial difference, sexual morality, and the reproduction of the nation-state. Furthermore, while analyzing their actual lives “from the perspective of the women,” I reinterpret the social meaning of sexual liaisons in terms of labor, identity, and (re)inhabitation of a world throughout their entire lives. Lastly, I attempt to suggest alternative understandings of agency and resistance of less powerful social groups by focusing on the women’s daily behaviors, attitudes and feelings.

To reiterate, the objectives of this research are: 1) to uncover the invisible history

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which have involved deep racial discrimination and reproduce the myths of racial purity molded by the biological conception of race and “a mono-racial nation” in Korea. For studies of Amerasian people, see M. Kim 2005c, M. Lee 2009, Maclear 1994-5, National Human Rights Committee of Korea 2003 and Okazawa-Rey 1997.



by examining the life histories and narratives of the women in the sex trade; 2) to analyze the deeper political implications of women in militarized prostitution in terms of racial difference, nation-state/familial state and classed gender; 3) to explain the everyday inequity and subversion by reconsidering unlikely forms of the latter.

## **1-2. Review of Literature: National and Global Context**

Militarized prostitution is a “distinguishably condensed phenomenon” which reveals the dynamics of sexism and racism that have played an important historical role in the colonization and military expansion in its global context (Enloe 1983). From the point of the host communities, such as Korea, the question of the U.S. military’s presence involves varying aspects ranging from national security in relation to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK; hereafter North Korea), sovereignty, international relations to the sexual liaisons between foreign troops and local women. Thus, although it was not until the 1990s that militarized prostitution gained public attention from feminists in a global context, Koreans have produced many novels, journalistic writings and newspaper articles, as well as scholarly writings since 1945 when the U.S. troops were first stationed in Korea. These reports include crimes of foreign soldiers, Amerasians, and the Korean women who have sexually served them, as well as other concomitant stories of environmental

destruction of the military bases, and the socioeconomic crisis that ensues in local host communities. Korean nationalism and the sensationalism of sexuality have continued to make journalists, filmmakers, novelists and academic scholars including feminists consistently interested in this issue.

Yet, with the rare exception of some geographical analysis of military camptowns (J. Kim 1979, J. Kim 1978, S. Lee 1985), most reports are rather journalistic. To no surprise, they focus on the antagonism of the western power substantiated by the station of the U.S. troops and on hybridness between races through the women's bodies. There is little theoretical analysis that "explains" the gendered political implications of fear from the western power, the hybridization of race, and the moral condemnation of women. Most literary works have voyeuristic tendencies that focus on sexualized bodies and sex work. Others concentrate on criticisms of the U.S. military authorities while portraying the U.S. as a neo colonial force. The latter's recognition has been initiated by Korean progressive nationalists (anti-colonial/American nationalists) since the late 1980s. Irrespective of the recognition of U.S. troops and the U.S. throughout history, the women are always subject to both condemnation and pity (M. Kim 2007). Likewise, most conventional studies on Amerasians centers on how they have been discriminated against and how they feel regarding their identity crisis. Thus, it is not surprising that most Korean writers

dealing with this issue have majored in social welfare.<sup>2</sup> In those studies the identity crisis of Amerasians are always assumed beforehand and taken-for-granted (M. Kim 2005c, Maclear 1994-5). Interestingly enough, the racial prejudice against mixed race people is often camouflaged under protections of “pity” or “compassion” for their fate as if they are unhappy by definition (Stoler 2002). As Maclear (1994-5) argues, the approaches to Amerasians through the pre-given identity crisis treats them as a pathological problem and thus they preclude an analysis of how that subject’s position is historically constituted, and located vis-à-vis specific power relations and social processes. Consequently, it reduces political and economic questions into individual ones.<sup>3</sup> As such most conventional studies have been reticent on the question of the historical specificity of race or the concept of identity itself which are considered as a pre-given crisis/problem to Amerasians (M. Kim 2005c).<sup>4</sup>

As for the women, a more diverse spectrum of studies has existed: a general study

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, conventional research on Korean Amerasians include: “A Study on the Self Identity of Amerasian Juveniles”; “The Realities and Problems on the Amerasians in Korea”; “The Social Education for Solving Amerasian Juvenile’s Problem, and The Social Welfare”; “Policy for Amerasian People in Korea,” and “A Study on Social Perceptions on Amerasians” (M. Kim 2005c; each author’s name is omitted).

<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the ramifications of a paradigm of “tolerance,” “charity,” and “rescue” in immigration and resettlement discourse in U.S. serve to prevent us from realizing the situatedness such as political-economic relations of domination and military conquest of U.S. in Asian societies. The discourses and practices, such as marginal man and (international) adoption, have served to naturalize Amerasians’ oppressions and to obscure the ways in which marginality is produced through power relations organized across the axes of race, class, and gender. Thus, while enforcing the racialized, gendered, and national boundaries, they reconfirm white domination and U.S. hegemony (Maclear 1994-5, 20).

<sup>4</sup> In the same context, the emphasis on sexual relations or sexual exploitation in feminist research ignores questions regarding the reproduction of nation-state itself involved in the politics of prostitution.

of the sex industry in Korea and analysis of the commercial sex trade (Lie 1996b, Shin 1993), militarized prostitution (M. Cho 2006, C. Kim 1975, H. Lee 1992, N. Lee 2006, J. Oh 1997) and international marriage (Brewer 1982, S. Kim 1979, Shukert 1998, Yoo 1993, Yuh 2002). Some studies trace the historical condition and roots of the sex industry while others describe the life patterns and characteristics by concentrating on the practice of sex work. These studies have some methodologies and assumptions in common while varying in focus and content: In these studies, women in the sex trade are portrayed as homogenous, controlled beings.

More recently, Korean feminists have begun to be more concerned with the women's voices and agencies rather than their sexual exploitations or historical trace of sex industry (Baek 1999, Gojeong 2006, J. Lee 2006, Magdalena House 2003). It was only in the mid 1990s when the first "political" analysis of Korean women in the sex trade with a theoretical tool of the gendered international relations was conducted by Katharine Moon (1997). She made a significant contribution to the understanding of the structural nature of the militarized prostitution around U.S. military camptowns in Korea. Her main claim is that the question of militarized prostitution is not a question of morally depraved Korean women but rather a structural one which inextricably involves the international relationship and negotiations between the U.S. and Korean government, as well as the political and economic dynamics of Korea.

While the issue of militarized prostitution has been addressed in such contexts as international relations, militarism, sovereignty, and national security by mostly non-western feminists since the 1990s, debates over prostitution in western feminist academia have mainly been developed by concentrating on sexuality, individual rights, free choice, and legal processes (Weisberg 1996). Studies on prostitution in this context have centered on the following questions: Is support for prostitutes/sex workers more important than the critique of prostitution, patriarchy, and sexism? Are prostitutes considered victims or agents? The debate finally falls on the question of decriminalization or the legalization of prostitution and the appropriateness of the moral evaluation of women in the sex industry. But as Belinda Carpenter (1994) aptly points out, these tendencies result in the lack of any substantial or prolonged critique of the sexed or the sexual foundation of prostitution (25-6). A more serious problem is that the legal trend toward the privatization of sexual matters between consenting adults and the focus on free choice has erased social, political and economical contexts within which the women act. We cannot imagine any form of prostitution without the global economy and state policies (Bishop and Robinson 1998, Carpenter 1994).

Cynthia Enloe has made central contributions to the understanding of the gendered nature of militarism and militarized prostitution. Enloe (1993) demonstrates

how the military base is always an intensely gendered process and how (macro) politics among nations reside in private sexual relations,<sup>5</sup> for example through a sexualized rest and recreation (R&R) policy. Also she nicely suggests how militarized prostitution is a “negotiable consequence” in interstate relations rather than an inevitable and natural one. In a more practical sense, Enloe (2000) further pinpoints women’s roles in the military: “Women are being used by militaries to solve their nagging problems of manpower availability, quality, health, morale, and readiness. Military policy makers have needed women to play a host of militarized roles: to boost morale, to provide comfort during and after wars, to reproduce the next generations of soldiers, to serve as symbols of a homeland worth risking one’s life, to replace men when the pool of suitable male recruits is low” (44). For example, the servicemen’s clubs within the bases were operated by the military authority (W. Pak 1978). As a less known system, there was the American Red Cross’s SRAO Programs from 1953 to 1973 in Korea (Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas Programs; they were also called the Clubmobile) composed of mostly young women<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Sexual practice is one of the sites of masculinity’s and femininity’s daily construction. That construction is international. It has been so for generations. Tourists and explorers, missionaries, colonial officials and health authorities, novelists, development technocrats, businessmen, and soldiers have long been the internationalizers of sexualized masculinity” (Enloe 1993, 154).

<sup>6</sup> According to the official homepage, at the request of General Douglas MacArthur (during the Korean War 1950-53), the Red Cross expanded its emergency mobile recreation service serving not only American troops but all United Nations forces. Eventually, there were 24 Red Cross canteen and club mobile units operating in Korea;  
<http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.d8aaecf214c576bf971e4cfe43181aa0/?vgnextoid=7afaaf3fbac3b110VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD&vgnextfimt=default>

(Davidson 2003, Gardiner 1992, MacDonald 1957).<sup>7</sup> Since the armistice was reached in Korea in 1953, the Red Cross had been providing a recreation program there, at the Department of Defense's request, to supplement military resources. As the forbidden but widely used term "Donut-Dolly" implies, the program encouraged active soldier participation in recreational activities that provided a relaxing break in the busy military schedule and helped keep young Americans in touch with home (Davidson 2003): They visited the military groups as frequently as possible with musical activities, games, stunts, gimmicks and general fun programs (MacDonald 1957, 114).

Philippine feminist activists Sturdevant's and Stoltzfus's *Let the Good Times Roll: the Sale of Women's Sexual Labor around U.S. Military Bases in the Philippines, Okinawa and the Southern Part of Korea* (1992) focus on poverty and the victimized situation of women in Asian societies. Despite their good intentions, an emphasis on the role of U.S. militarism tends to reinforce the feminized and "orientalist" image of

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<sup>7</sup> MacDonald's study (1957) is a useful source for a general history of the program in Korea and other areas. As MacDonald pinpointed, it was not unique in Korea: They operated the off-base Recreation Centers in Europe. The program was expanded to Vietnam at the request of the military in 1966. For England case where the clubmobile was first initiated, see Gardiner 1992.

Davidson's edited book *Life in a Fish Bowl: a Call to Serve* composed of essays by women used to work with the SRAO programs presents how the women felt pride to serve or felt sexual discrimination in a military system. For example, one woman writes "although the term 'Donut-Dolly' was forbidden during our initial training days in DC, I liked being called a 'Donut-Dolly' and I think most of us did -it was a term of endearment that all the men we visited, whatever their rank, felt comfortable using. It was nice to hear and really made us feel somewhat special" (13); "We were all college graduates with degrees in very diverse fields. To remind soldiers of the sisters, mothers, girl friends, and wives they had left behind and to relive the hours of tedium" (26); "Another epiphany which emerged from my journal was about language. Male soldiers (even boys barely 18) were to be called men, while we women who were at least 22 years old were called 'girls' much of the time, an inequity in language to be sure" (40).

Asia. They reproduce women as victims within the western stereotypes of structured poverty.

Drawing upon Cynthia Enloe's main claims, Katharine Moon's *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S. and South Korea Relations* (1997) presents a breakthrough case study of Korean militarized prostitution. It shows how the international political relations are fundamentally intertwined with the personal and further presents the intentionality of militarized prostitution in Korea. In examining the South Korean government's utilization of militarized prostitution and the negotiation process between the two governments surrounding "the camptown clean-up campaign" in the 1970s, she argues how the internalization of the privilege of whiteness, coupled with the medicalization of Korean women's bodies, are embedded in a deeply rooted discourse of race and sexualized racial relationships. Given hegemonic narratives of military security and the naturalness of militarized prostitution in the Korean national public sphere, Moon's analysis is of utmost importance. Her analysis of the negotiation process of the prostitution policy between nations aptly discloses a false, yet deep-rooted assumption of hegemonic nationalist discourses regarding militarized prostitution in which local states have been described as feminized, passive actors. Moon (1998) states that "between legally sovereign states, the weaker does not merely rely on a passive recipient of the actions of the



stronger... To attribute the exploitation and abuse of women to weakness and passivity, or feminization, of a client state is to exempt that state from taking responsibility for its actions toward and regarding women. It strips the weaker state of agency and over-emphasizes the role of the stronger state” (157). The mere existence of power disparities between and among nations does not automatically translate into subordinated positions for women in a weaker country to the men of a stronger country (Ibid., 142). Once again Moon’s study is quite critical in the sense that she takes up the deep-seated personalized and moral condemnation of the women in the sex trade industry in conjunction with the hegemonic nationalist narratives in relation to the U.S., by displaying the negotiation process between two governmental authorities. She also provides us with detailed empirical, historical evidence of the 1970s on the issue. Thus the book has had great influence on the public and academia in Korea ever since 2002 the year it was translated into Korean.

Enloe’s and Moon’s focuses on a structural approach is of course important. However, one problem with an (over)emphasis on the state and military authorities is that the fixed variable of the state overshadows other causal and actual variables. As Mitchell (2000) argues, this ignores the state’s role from economy. Another problem is the construction of a uniform stereotype of the women’s victimhood that never explains the delicate and complex lives of the women in the sex trade. Such a

tendency produces and reinforces the discourse of political victims in Korea, a comparatively new discourse.

Based on a similar critique of the macro structural approach to the militarized prostitution, anthropologist Sea-Ling Cheng in her dissertation research *“Transnational Desires: Trafficked Filipinas in US Military Camp Towns in South Korea”* (2002) analyzes the lives of Filipina women working as entertainers. During her fieldwork in Korea, Cheng witnessed the rapid replacement of Korean women with Filipina and Russian women in the sex trade. Originally wanting to compare militarized and commercial prostitution in Korea, she came to examine the lives of Filipina women.<sup>8</sup> Cheng provides us with an interesting, analytical point worthy of consideration. She analyzes the discourse of “romantic love” between Filipina women and GIs (Government Issue). While specifying the labor of romantic love in the associated discourses of virginity, the demand for faithfulness, emotion and pity, and playing with love (from the point of view of GIs), she concludes the discourse of love as a social practice, negotiated and reproduced in the politics of desire.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, she aptly questions the victimizing approach of NGOs which presumes “the moral

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<sup>8</sup> She collaborated with Korean feminist Jaehi Baek, who has documented the life patterns and characteristic of Filipina women in the sex trade by focusing on their life experiences (1999).

<sup>9</sup> “The commoditization of intimacy and sexuality in the clubs thus threatens to undermine the personhood and individuality of the Filipinas as well as GIs’. The apparent superficiality of the romantic love discourse that characterizes entertainer-client interaction and intimacy is thus frequently underlined by a desire to assert individual respectability and self-worth through a search for genuine affection.” (Cheng 2002, 216)

authority” coming from the women’s suffering caused by the global capital system and patriarchal cultures, of which state and inter-state bodies are held accountable (Cheng 2002, 281). She presents the lack of cooperation between the different women’s groups in conjunction with the lack of resources within Korea (because of a lack of concern for migrant workers), NGO’s reluctance to recognize the woman’s position as sex work, the marginality of *gijichon* (military camptown) women, the lower class status of migrant workers in Korea, and the morally dubious nature of entertainers (Ibid., 286).

As for the question of women’s agency and resistance, Enloe and Moon’s stance presumes a somewhat resilient, assertive display of women’s sexuality and desire. Their understanding of agency rests on open forms of resistance such as the establishment of women’s (self-governed) organizations and their protest against social discrimination. In contrast, Cheng defines the Filipina entertainers as women, migrants, and sex workers at the outset. She takes an “eclectic” understanding of the agency and selfhood by questioning deep-rooted divisions between victimhood and agency: “A more complicated view of the agency and selfhood of those who resist would see people caught in contradictions, constructing new arrangement of meaning and power as they craft their lives but never authentically resisting power to attain some emancipatory utopia” (Cheng 2002, 310). However, such an eclectic approach

which is pervasive in feminist academia, limits her argument to a reflexive agency that “love is a weapon of the weak for the Filipina women” (Cheng 2007, 229).

Furthermore Cheng’s focus on intimate relationships in the work environment tends to reproduce a patriarchal sexual morality by confining the life experience of female migrants to only sexualized identity and labor of sex trade itself.

In spite of the limitations aforementioned, my study parallels Cynthia Enloe’s and Katharine Moon’s stance on the gendered nationalism and militarism, as well as the structural nature of militarism and the intentionality of the two governments on militarized prostitution. I also concur with Cheng’s focus on women’s desire and agency. My questions are: How can we analyze the economic and political interactions in micro economics around the women? How can we interpret the sexual liaisons in political terms? And finally how can we theorize the women’s agency? To do this, I explore mainstream discourses around the women by tracing literary works. Further I take more carefully women’s own narratives and accounts I collected. Lastly, I attempt to consider the question of agency, “without either misattributing to them (Bedouin women) forms of consciousness or politics that are not part of their experience -something like a feminist consciousness or feminist politics- or devaluing their practices as prepolitical, primitive, or even misguided... without resorting to analytical concepts like false consciousness, which dismisses their own understanding

of their situation, or impression management, which makes of them cynical manipulators” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 47-8). Thus, what I contribute to existing works is to consider the political economy of camptowns by studying “the lives of the women,” and to explain the deep political implications of the sex trade in relation to the presence of U.S. troops. In addition, this research attempts to overcome the division between agency and victimhood by redefining resistance and considering invisible and unlikely forms of subversions.

## **2. Methods and Sources**

### **2-1. Subjects and Field Research**

This research employs the method of political ethnography (Wedeen 1999). I conducted fieldwork in Korea for eight months (on two separate occasions) in 2006 and 2007. During this time, I interviewed forty-five relevant people and conducted participant observation at two NGOs, My Sister’s Place (Durebang in Korean; hereafter MSP) and Sunlit Sisters’ Center (hereafter SSC).

The main subjects of this research are Korean women who have been involved in the sex trade and who used to work or are currently working in bars as waitresses. Most of the subjects are currently living in camptowns surrounding or near the U.S. military bases. The women’s age ranges from their mid 20s to late 70s with the

majority being between their 40s-70s. They have lived through the Korean War (1950-53), the heyday of military camptowns in the 1960-70s and in the late 1980s. Although I am mainly concerned with the experience of Korean women, I also pay attention to the lives of Filipina and Russian women working in the sex trade in order to more fully comprehend the past of the Korean women. A focus on the immigrant women is critical in understanding the perspective of the agency and subjectivity formation as well as their external conditions of citizenship and migration. Thus the commonalties and differences between them are taken into account. However immigrant women are not the main subjects of this research. Another central subject are the social agents, such as the NGOs (staff members), filmmakers, and volunteers who establish interpersonal relations with women and play a critical role in reproducing (institutionalized) knowledge about the women.<sup>10</sup>

I analyze a wide range of sources including autobiographies, autobiographic fiction, non-fiction,<sup>11</sup> popular (Korean) literature, documentary films,<sup>12</sup> newspaper

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<sup>10</sup> All the interviewee's names have been changed. Even in the case of already mentioned fictitious interviewees, their pseudonyms are not specified in certain instances where some confidentiality was needed.

<sup>11</sup> The Korean autobiographies and autobiographical fiction by the women and relevant people include: Pak, Oksun, *Under Which Heaven does My Star Lie?* (1965), An, Jaejeong, ed., *I Make You Reformed: Essays and Confessions of Condemned Criminals, Gangsters, Delinquents and Prostitutes* (1980) and Kim, Yeonja, *A Big Sister in America Town Screams even until 5 Minutes before She Dies* (2005). And the works by and on Amerasians are: Kim, Sandy, *The Sad March: An Essay of Black Amerasian Singer Sandy Kim* (1974), Jeong, Okjin, "A School for Mixed Blood Children" (1984) and Kim, Elizabeth, *Ten Thousand Sorrows* (2000; written in English). Others include for general and informative backgrounds of camptown formation and lives in camptowns: Lee, Gyeik, *An Oarsman in Soyang River* (1978), Pak, Wonchan, *20 Years with American GIs* (1978; He writes about the lives within the base as a Korean worker), Kim, Seokha, *The Dead Zone of Survival* (1991) and Moon,

articles, governmental periodicals, and participant observation and first-hand qualitative interviews through fieldwork research. In addition to academic writings, documentary films are used as critical sources as well. This is because “cinema has been a primary means through which race and gender are visualized as natural categories; cinema has been the site of intersection between anthropology, popular culture, and the constructions of nation and empire” (Rony 1996, 9). The governmental documents from National Archives and Records Service in Korea did not offer much information and most were concentrated on the period of 1970s. Yet the documents I collected were useful enough with regard to the historical and general framework of the Korean government on militarized prostitution.

As briefly noted, the field research for participant observation and interviews was

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Youngmi, *Nobody Listens Their Stories* (1999; It is an semi-autobiography on Faye Moon a co-founder of MSP written by her daughter, author).

In the meantime, most U.S. servicemen’s personal narratives during the War and their duty in Korea have been focused on their battle experiences. Some useful autobiographies of U.S. soldiers for this study are Waltner, Richard H., *Men in Skirts: an Army Medic's Account of the Korean War and After* (2000) and Woods, Mac. E., *Korea: Hills, Rice Patties, and Whores* (2001). Woods and Waltner, who were in Korea in the early 1960s and mid-1950s respectively, describe gendered military training, practical uselessness of sexual education, socialization of racism and sexism within the military, bad treatment and perception of the women in the sex trade, and rest and recreation leave in Japan back then.

Apart from such aspects, noticeable in their writings to me were the (derogatory) terms “gook” for Korean people (Walter) and “moose” for women in the sex trade (Woods) which do not seem to be pervasive any longer nowadays. Much GI pidgin across the Far East originated in the American occupation of Japan. The term “gook” as a term applying to all Polynesian or Oriental natives and attributed it to the troops’ need for a term to refer to all non-Caucasians; Moose is a corruption of the Japanese “musume,” lit., daughter, which refers to an American soldier’s mistress normally maintained off base in a “hooch” (rented room) in the “vil(lage)” (camptown) during the tour in Korea (Clark 2003, 289).

<sup>12</sup> Two documentary films *Women Building a House on the Road* (MSP 2007) and *And Thereafter 2* (Hosop Lee 2006) have not been released in public. I specially thank the MSP, an unidentifiable person, and the director Hosop Lee for sending the films and allowing me to use them.

conducted on two separate occasions in 2006 and 2007. The research sites were Gosan-dong (urban district) in Uijeongbu-si (city), Seonnyu-ri (village) in Paju-si, Gwangam-dong and Bosan-dong in Dongducheon-si, and Anjeong-ri in Pyeongtaek-si. These sites are all located in Gyeonggi-do (province), the northern part of Korea, which is concentrated with camptowns because of the geographical proximity of the demilitarized zone (DMZ; the truce line between North and South Korea). In addition to the high intensity of camptowns, the NGOs I was involved with were located in the area as well making it another practical reason for the selection of research sites.

**Table 1: Research Sites and the Military Camps**

Cities	U.S. Military Camps
Gosan-dong, Uijeongbu-si	Camp Stanley
Bosan-dong, Dongducheon-si	Camp Casey
Seonnyu-ri, Paju-si	Camp Giant (Closed in 2004)
Anjeong-ri, Pyeongtaek-si	Camp Humphreys
Gwangam-dong, Dongducheon-si	Camp Hovey

Among the NGOs that supported women in the sex trade around the camptowns, contact was made possible by two NGOs located in Gyeonggi-do. I worked as a volunteer at MSP in Gosan-dong, Uijeongbu-si, which was next to Camp Stanley, from June to August 2006 and from January to May 2007. MSP is a comparatively influential women's organization run by the Women's Division of the Korean Presbyterian church. It was established in 1986 and has worked to support Korean and



immigrant women who have worked/are working in the sex industry. The main services include counseling, arts and craft therapy (stopped a few years ago), legal support with cooperation of other relevant local and legal organizations, medical support, documentation projects such as research on the status of women and Amerasians, and film making. As a volunteer, I participated in interpreting immigrant clients, mostly Filipina women, translating documents and visiting Korean elderly women in Paju-si and Uijeongbu-si with whom MSP had some relationships. I also worked with another institution, SSC located at Anjeong-ri in Pyeongtaek-si, which was next to Camp Humphreys during May 2007. SSC was established six years ago for Amerasians and elderly Korean women who were involved with the sex trade or were working in clubs. SSC is a Christian based institute which holds regular mass on Tuesdays and offers lunch afterwards. Among the sixty people who have registered with Chrysanthemum Association (a voluntary association of the women in Pyeongtaek-si; jachihoe in Korean), approximately twenty were regular visitors. The center suggested I help take the testimony of women as a co-researcher with a former staff member from the center. We agreed to share the testimony. The co-interviews were taken over a period of one month.

I conducted formal interviews with Korean women, Filipina and Russian immigrant women, club owners, and social agents such as feminists, filmmakers,

volunteers and staff members from NGOs. I also engaged in numerous unstructured interviews during the course of my fieldwork. In the case of Anjeong-ri in Pyeongtaek-si, sixteen women who were regular visitors participated in collecting testimony during the period. Except for the SSC's cases, most interviewees were directly introduced by MSP. Nine out of approximately twenty-five Korean women in Bosan-dong in 2007 (MSP) could be interviewed. In Paju-si, four elderly women among fourteen women who were associated with the women's (self-governed) association in Seonnyu-ri were interviewed. The circumstances of these formal and informal interviews were varied depending on the informant's personal disposition, age (difference), willingness to speak, health condition, interviewees' various situations for which they engaged in NGOs and other relevant organizations, and the relationship between the interviewee and interviewer. For instance, data were also collected in the process of counseling and crisis involvement of NGOs with other staff members' presence. In such cases of professional staff members' and a co-researcher's presence, I did not interrupt the process in most cases. Follow-up interviews were made on my own as needed. After I came back to the U.S., some email communications were made.

## **2-2. Experience and History**

I happened to meet an elderly Korean man during my camptown fieldtrip (July 26-29, 2006). The fieldtrip to several camptowns was supported by the MSP and The National Campaign for Eradication of Crimes by U.S. Troops in Korea.<sup>13</sup> He was a long term prisoner for his left-wing philosophies. It was by chance that he retold his past. In actuality, he did not talk to me nor did he intend to but to another man in his fifties who was also imprisoned for his participation in the Korean democratization movement during the 1980s. Nobody initiated the storytelling but they naturally began to speak to each other about their past experiences. They seemed to be very proud of their past careers.

Although I do not intend to undervalue their stories/experiences of being imprisoned for their own long held political beliefs, it was quite apparent that the dialogue was clearly gendered and classed. Although he was imprisoned for his communist political conviction while suffering physically as well as psychologically for a long period of time, the elderly man seemed to feel proud of what he had

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<sup>13</sup> The direct cause of the formation of this organization was the murder incident of Kumi Yun former sex worker by Private Kenneth Markle, of 1992. Although many past crimes committed by U.S. troops, the brutality of the murder attracted popular attentions in Korea. "Joint Commission for Counter-Measures Regarding Miss Yun, Kumi Case" was formed at once and it was this coalition of consisting 23 diverse organizations such as women's groups, workers' organizations, student groups, religious groups, and human rights organizations. This initial coalition came to inaugurate the founding of "The National Campaign for Eradication of Crime by U.S. Troops in Korea" on October 26, 1993 with the following more systematic aims: to do research and investigate the crimes committed by US troops against Korean citizens, eradicate such crimes, work for the revision of SOFA (A Status of Forces Agreement) toward an agreement that guarantees equal rights, and finally reform the unequal system of international relations between the U.S. and Korea in order to work towards autonomy as a nation; <http://www.usacrime.or.kr/>

endured. Whether or not he planned to, he seemed to feel redeemed by the respect he received from the people around him. In contrast, the women I spoke with felt reluctant to tell their life histories. Of course some wanted to recall the stories without much difficulty, but none told the stories with as much pride as the old man. In what context are some stories regarded as shameful and others as proud ones? Whose stories and by whom are they reproduced? Whose stories are revealed and written in an official history? Eventually whose stories are regarded as “official histories?” And more importantly, how can I listen and interpret the silences surrounding the marginalized social groups? This is not to say that we need to simply “add” women’s voices and stories to conventional male’s histories (Scott 1999), but that one needs to interpret the context of the silences and pay more attention to the hidden stories of the less voiced. It is in this context that I pay attention to the less privileged social groups’ own voices and experiences.

In taking experience as an analytic tool, I do not argue “the authority of experience,” or “the authenticity of experiential knowledge” nor do I believe that the narratives of interviews and autobiographies are always and essentially “truth or the true knowledge.” This is because even autobiography is a socially situated written form. Yet, at a theoretical level, drawing upon Joan Scott (1991), Paula Moya (1997), and Beverley Skeggs (1997) among others, I suggest that experience can be an origin

of knowledge. According to Moya (1997), “experience” refers to the fact of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing a particular event or situation. By this definition, experience is admittedly subjective. Experiences are not wholly external events; experiences happen to us, and it is our theoretically, mediated interpretation of an event that makes it an “experience.” The meanings we give to our experience are inescapably conditioned by the ideologies and theories through which we view the world. That is, the experiences a person is likely to have will be largely determined by her social location in a given society (Moya 1997, 135-6). I also believe that subjugated standpoints promise a more adequate, sustained, objective, transformative account of the world. That is, some identities can be more “politically progressive” and “analytically realistic” than others, not because they are transgressive or indeterminate, but because they provide us with a critical perspective from which social scientists can decipher the complicated workings of ideology and oppression. Paul Farmer (1997) an anthropologist and physician, in speaking of the difference between “explaining” and making sense of suffering, points out three reasons for the relative failure in explaining suffering: the exoticization of suffering, difficulty in rendering suffering itself, and the fact that anonymous victims have little voice in history as well as a poor understanding of the dynamic and distribution of suffering. Then Farmer concludes that “it is one thing to make sense of extreme

suffering -a universal activity surely, and quite another to explain it” (Ibid., 272).

Through this research, by employing the conceptual tool of experience in these contexts, I attempt to explain the individual experience within the larger social matrix rather than simply disclosing women’s oppression and voices with moral authorizations and merely reproducing their disadvantaged situations.

Technically, this research is both historical and theoretical. However I do not deal with the whole Korean history. It is without dispute that historical and political change has influenced the lives of people directly and indirectly. I do not underplay or underestimate the effects of political and economic change during the Korean War in the 1950s or intensively state-led industrial development in the 1970s. It is well known that the Korean War in 1950s is the most fundamental historical event which framed many Korean women in the sex trade. During the state-led industrialization (export-oriented industrialization) in 1970s, many young women moved from rural areas to cities and camptowns which effectively led to a geographic shift and women’s roles in the workforce. It is of no doubt that these critical events have had a profound influence on every individual’s life.

However I was convinced as well that they remembered their lives or events more through emotions, feelings, and more importantly through interpersonal relationships

than in chorological order itself.<sup>14</sup> It echoes in a statement of a former staff member with MSP addressing the discrepant focus of narratives between the listener and the speaker.

There is another example when the expectation of the listener and speaker is different during a counseling session or an interview. To the listeners who want to hear their stories, it's important to know what kind of damage the women got after what happened. They need to know when, where, what, how, why and in what order it happened in some detail. However, you can find that the women do not focus on what exactly happened. They express what happened to them and how they feel about it in a different way. I can still remember the elderly women (former comfort women) who were getting psychiatric exams to go to the court of Tokyo in year 2000 that used this method when they expressed themselves. One of the elderly women said that after the Independence Day, she put on nine layers of clothes and came all the way to Busan (Southern Province in Korea) from Manchuria and sold her layers of clothes to buy food. It was an adventure tale almost like the Odyssey. It is not important if she was able to actually wear her nine layers of clothes or if she was actually able to sell her clothes to buy food. Although they had some of the worst life experiences, they did not lose their sense of humor in their stories. Through their stories, they were getting healed up to a certain degree. (D. Kim 2005)

As such, listeners and social agents have tended to formalize the sequence of events concentrating on dramatic incidents of women's life experiences. Yet the fictions of self-representation are "accounts of the emotional states that they construed as worth talking about -physical suffering, martyrdom, rage, salvation" (to paraphrase Behar 1993, 273) and daily subversions in particular moments. With the discrepancy

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<sup>14</sup> In social science scholarship, the debate over time revolves around the division between phenomenal time (historical truth or A series) and physical time (narrative truth or B series). The former refers to a categorization of events according to past, present, or future. The latter refers to the occurrence before or after in relation to each other. For specific debate on this, see Das 2007, chapters 5 and 6.

between listener and speaker in constructing one's life and the inevitability of historical/chronological truth in my mind, I selectively employ some historical moments such as the Korean War, intensive state-led industrialization period of the 1960-70s, and the present to trace and understand the lives of the women.

What I am more concerned with is the theoretical development in terms of agency, oppression, subversion, social identity/identification, the articulation between nation, class, gender and race, the process of knowledge production on sex trade, and the politics of (re)presentation. In existing literatures on militarized prostitution, the historical deployment and detailed descriptions of sex trade and subsequent disclosure of the exploitation and violence against women are well documented. They are familiar themes and methodologies. However theoretical aspects have been much underdeveloped. This is because such institutionalized or "socially preferred" forms of knowledge and methodologies on the sex trade have predominated, and thus have hindered us from seeking other theoretical and methodological possibilities. To overcome such methodological limits, I place theory (conceptual analysis) into history (factual/empirical description) insisting on ethnographic details. Thus, although each chapter employs a different level of analysis, historical, material and discursive, all chapters are fundamentally interconnected centering on these theoretical concepts.



### 2-3. Politics of Naming

While working in the NGOs, I witnessed young female staff members and volunteers calling the women in their 40-50s “eonni” to emphasize their close relationship. The word “eonni” literally refers to an older sister in a family and is often extended to older females in general social relations. Yet, in some instances, the term also implies a clear-cut social discrimination. For example, it is not proper for a man to call a woman “eonni” in any social relation. Yet it often happens when men want to ridicule or degrade women in the name of closeness and/or kindness. The problem is that the term is applied to only women with low-skilled, socially degraded jobs such as waitresses or receptionists in the Korean context. Baek (2003) in her fieldnote confessed how uncomfortable she was with the term, but followed the rules thinking the term was that of affection and part of the culture in the camptowns. She was later advised to call them “aunties” from an elderly woman working in a club who asked her “How could you call me ‘eonni’? You are much younger than me” (199). In a similar context, a filmmaker who used to be involved with Korean women in camptowns, pinpointed the problem with an interpellation of “gijichon women”:

The women in *gijichon* are just (called) *gijichon* women. We do not name those who work in agricultural fields, “agriculture women.” We offer a “special” name for those who work in *gijichon*. The fact that they are providing sexual service to the American

soldiers makes people from the outside feel that they are “too strong (wrong).” They feel that it’s kind of weird to just call them ajumma (Mrs.). That’s how the women are labeled and it becomes their interpellation.<sup>15</sup>

Along with the interpellation of “gijichon women,” the term “eonni” in camptowns inevitably involves such an ideological implication. Thus ajumeoni or ajumma which refers to Mrs. would be an appropriate and more respectful term (ajumma is an abbreviated naming of ajumeoni, and ajumeoni is more polite expression).

Naming something or someone is definitely “political.” In feminist academia and activism, the old tension of the two terms, sex work versus prostitution exemplifies such political power relations as well. Since the effectuation of two special laws on sex trade on September 2004 in Korea,<sup>16</sup> many NGOs and shelters for women in the sex trade industry have been established. During my fieldwork, I was continuously asked about the division between the sex worker and prostitute, at which point I felt I should choose one or the other. I have never before taken a serious stance on the division because I have been sympathetic with the idea that “although we choose to

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<sup>15</sup> Interview, August 2006.

<sup>16</sup> The law consists of two acts: The Act on the Punishment of Procuring Prostitution and Associated Acts, and the Act on the Prevention of Prostitution and Protection of its Victims. The first focuses on penalizing procurers and traffickers to sanction for trafficking and procuring prostitution. The second establishes institutional facilities and counseling centers in order to give support for victims. It granted protection for victims of prostitution as well as prostitutes seeking to escape the sex industry (J. Kim 2007, 2, 8). Under those two acts, victims of prostitution are subject to assistance and counseling instead of being subject to punishment (Dasihamkke Center 2006). It applies to immigrant women as well. Thus if they are (are proven to be) victims, immigrant women are subject to some support for going back to their home country and reducing to protective institutions rather than conventional compulsory deportation (International Organization for Migration, Seoul, 2007; hereafter IOM).

use the more respectful (term) ‘sex-worker’ that has fewer connotations than the word ‘prostitute,’ there is no denying that she receives no respect whatsoever”

(Sleightholme and Sinha 1996). Yet the essence and intent of using the term “sex worker” should be valued in the sense that sex work should not have its emphasis on sex but that of work/labor. The division is problematic in itself. Who raises the question? What is the criterion of the division? How can we identify it, if any? No one I interviewed approached the practice this way although, of course, they were fully aware of how society perceived it. It is crucial to add that it does not mean that the women identify themselves as sex workers as pro-sex work feminist scholarship has claimed. While young immigrant women identified themselves as “entertainers” by differentiating from both sex workers and prostitutes on one hand, and “juicy girls” or “drinkie girls” which presumed degradation and sexualized image on the other hand (Baek 1999, 2003), most Korean women I interviewed are reticent in self-identifying themselves even when we discussed the sex trade.

In this research, I interchangeably use “militarized prostitution” with an intent to stress its structural aspect, “women in the sex trade” and “women who were or are experiencing sex trade,” or sex work. Sometimes prostitution is also used because the social term of sex trade in Korea has been changed from prostitution to sex trade ever since the 1990s in feminist academia. More recently, the past juridical term for the

women as “the morally depraved women” has been changed into “women in the sex trade” due to the reformed law of 2004 (J. Kim 2007, 9). The expression here, “was or are experiencing sex trade” is strategic and involves critical implications. As I shall examine through this research, most Korean women I met for this research have experienced not only “the work of sex trade” but also many other jobs, such as factory worker, housemaid, nanny, dishwasher in a restaurant, and doing domestic housework throughout their entire lives. Also some women who once worked in the sex industry chose not to partake in that type of work any more but to run a small shop/restaurant or work in other places. Another critical implication underlying the usage is to emphasize that the experience of sex trade has not necessarily “overdetermined” their entire lives and more critically their social identity.

Meanwhile, women sexually engaging with foreign (mostly American) soldiers are historically called “UN madam,” “special entertainer,” “US army lady,” and “comfort women” which were originally pointed to women during Japanese colonial rule (1910-45). It was an unpredicted finding that until the mid 1980s, “comfort women” was the most common term in almost newspaper articles, journalistic works, and even academic writings in Korea. In addition to the literal reference of the euphemistic term comfort, the popular and long time usage of the term clearly manifests the ideology of gendered militarism. Similarly, in Korean yangsaegsi

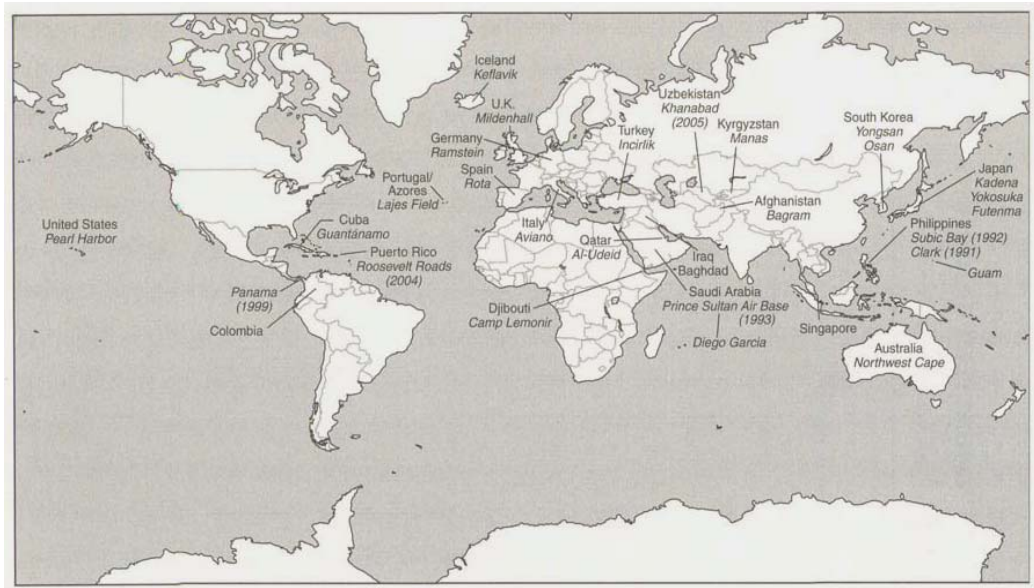
(western girl), yanggongju (western princess), yangbuin (western wife) and as the most derogatory term yanggalbo (western whore) are commonly used. These terms are employed when I use historical, textual sources.

### **3. Outline of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 presents the historical and geopolitical development of the camptowns. This chapter concentrates on the local internal dynamics, geopolitical development of camptowns, and the relationship between two governments that practice contradictory policies. Chapter 3 explores the discursive and political dynamics of the women in the sex trade and Amerasians. This is done by mainly reviewing Korean literature on camptowns and women in the sex trade. First, I consider the context of anti-Americanism and Korean nationalism. Nationalist narratives and visible feminist rhetoric are subsequently examined. In addition to looking at how and why the nation and national identity are bound to a biologically essentialist notion of racial purity in Korea and U.S., I delve into the deeper implications of this issue in relation to racial difference, sexual morality and the reproduction of the nation-state. Finally, I present a marginalized but transcending discourse surrounding the women. Chapters 4 and 5 are fundamentally interconnected through a focus on some concepts of identity, oppression, agency, and subversion as well as the politics of representation and the

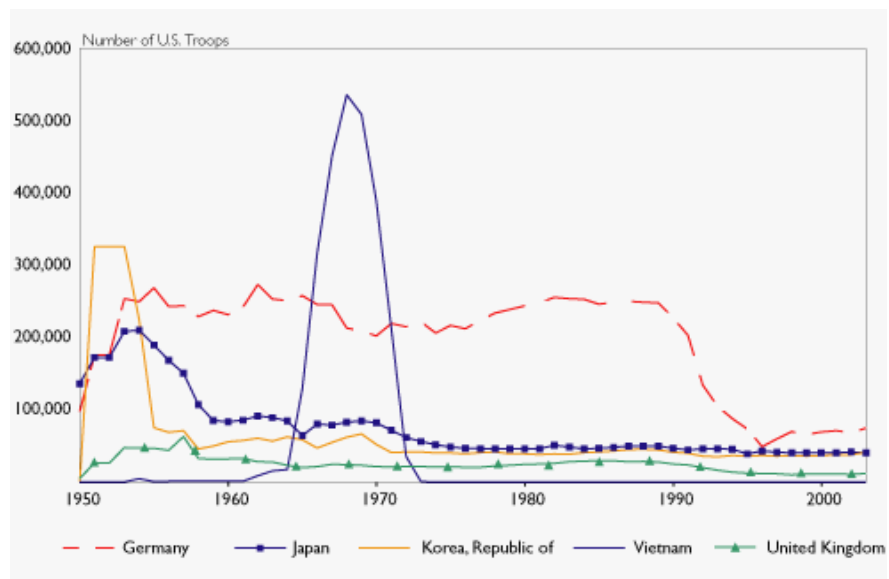
process of knowledge production. In both chapters, I question victimization, fetishism of sexuality (sexualized identity), fatalism, and limited forms of agency. Chapter 4 presents the actual aspects of women in the sex trade on the basis of their own accounts and life histories. I present sex trade as a continuum of other informal and temporary works and (re)inhabitation of a world in reading their reticence on past sex trade experience. Chapter 5 considers the various contexts of victimization, the nature of oppression, and agency. I demonstrate that rather than open forms of resistance, unlikely and less dramatic forms of subversion such as silence and social distance are the daily and actual forms of subversion most women use. In the process, I explore the limitations of reflexive forms of resistance, the tension between structure and agent, and daily/intersectional nature of inequity and subversion. Finally, chapter 6 summarizes the main claims and presents implications, contributions, and limitations of the research.

### Map 1: Major U.S. Military Bases Overseas



Source: Calder, Kent E. *Embattled Garrisons*, 2007<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 1: Five Largest Deployments of U.S. Troops Overseas, 1950-2003**

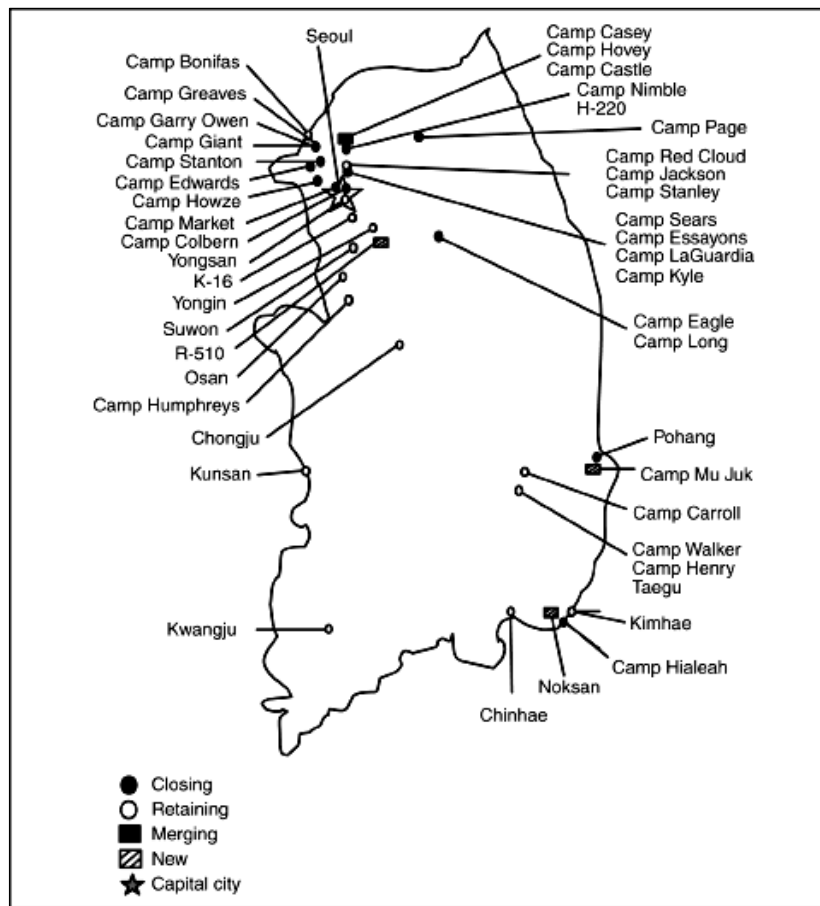


Source: Tim Kane's Calculation (2004) based on annual records from the U.S. Department of Directorate for Information Operations and Reports.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The author's note: The sites of representative current U.S. bases are in italics; parenthetical years indicate the date of closure of an inactive base.

<sup>18</sup> The author's note: Data for 1951 and 1952 are estimated.

**Map 2: U.S. Troop Installations in Korea under the Land Partnership Plan (LPP)**



Source: United States General Accounting Office (GAO), “Defense Infrastructure: Basing Uncertainties Necessitate Reevaluation of U.S. Construction Plans in South Korea,” 2003.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The U.S.-South Korean Land Partnership Plan, signed in March 2002, was designed to consolidate U.S. installations, improve combat readiness, enhance public safety, and strengthen the U.S.-South Korean alliance. This report was made for congressional committees by the GAO on mainly the scope and cost of the LPP in relation to total infrastructure issues of U.S. installations in Korea.



## **Chapter 2: Internal Dynamics of Camptowns: History and Policies**

### **1. Reconsideration of Knowledge on Foreign Camptowns in Asian Societies**

The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a general, historical background and descriptions of the sex trade in camptowns.

Earlier, I have noted that due to the fundamentally methodological transformation of militarized prostitution, Moon's analysis of camptowns during the 1970s, has quickly begun to be accepted in both local and international public spheres. Specially, her analysis has created a new powerful discourse on women seen as political, historical victims among academics and activists in the Korean society. In actuality, Moon's main concern was not with the sex trade in camptowns itself but with the dynamics of the interstate, organizational interests on disparate international relationships and its substantiation into a personal level. Her work is the Korean "case study" of the international relationship based on a study of the clean-up campaign during the 1970s. In a summary essay (Moon 1998), she makes this point more concise and clearer: the South Korean government had a laissez-faire attitude toward life on the camp bases and considered camptowns as a U.S. problem or a matter between the GIs and the local women to handle, not a matter that concerned state-to-state relations and security affairs (150). The U.S. commitment to non-communist Asian allies and the Korean troop's contribution to the Vietnam War strengthened the

Korean government's ability to resist or downplay the demands and complaints of the USFK (United States Forces, Korea) authorities regarding camptown issues. It was due to the Nixon Doctrine and the subsequent reduction and withdrawal of Korean troops from Vietnam in the early 1970s that the U.S. officials in Korea were about to gain the upper hand in terms of camptown issues:

For the USFK, the clean-up efforts were a means to defend its organizational interests vis-à-vis the policy makers in Washington and as a symbol of its commitment to remain in Korea, regardless of Washington's policy statements. For the Korean government, the clean-up was an integral part of private diplomacy, a desperate resort to use local people and resources, in the absence of conventional carrots and sticks, to secure U.S. commitments to Korea. (151)

As such what she wants to demonstrate is that how and in what specific contexts disparate two governments manage their own interests through the case of camptown clean-up campaign of 1970s.

Unlike her original focus, however, her theoretical framework causes some understandable misreading of her study. Moon's structural methodological analysis is "conveniently" combined with two other popular tendencies: familiar reductionism to abstract entities like state and society in the studies on sex trade (Cook 1998) and colonialist application of Asian societies in the international context with sweeping descriptions of local nations. For example, in Calder's recent book *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (2007) with its

introduction to a Korean case, the Park's regime (1961-79) is evidenced as one case of "fiat politics" which is characterized as highly command-oriented.<sup>20</sup> Even though he attempts to analyze the politics of U.S. overseas bases, he fails to connect host nations and the foreign military bases. Baker's study (2004) more employs Moon's work in this way: "In Korea the industry was sanctioned by the Korean government, which wished to keep the U.S. Army in the country as protection from its dangerous neighbor to the north but also wanted to shield the general population from 'contamination' by American soldiers" (xvii).<sup>21</sup> The tendency of reductionism to abstract state and society in studies of sex trade is reproduced by a dissertation (2006) written by Nayoung Lee, Korean feminist on the military camptown prostitution in Korea, where she traces back the historical origins of sex trade in camptowns to the Japanese colonial rule, in a descriptive fashion and on the basis of Moon's main arguments on the role of two states.

On another deeper level, Moon's top-down logic of interstate politics "determining" the local political economy and women's personal actions is

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<sup>20</sup> Calder categorizes the politics of U.S. overseas bases into four paradigms: compensation politics (Japan/Italy), fiat politics (Park's Korea/Franco's Spain), bazaar politics (Turkey/Philippines) and affective politics (Saudi Arabia). The fiat-politics paradigm of base relations, in short, accords power resources, domestic legitimacy, and external support to a centralized national-security apparatus, typically the military, that is prone to use those resources to assure base-politics stability.

<sup>21</sup> Similarly, quoting Moon's work, Zimelis (2009) addresses that "we have to keep in mind that states use different groups and classes of individuals to pursue the national interest. The aim of her article is to identify the ways in which a specific group of women -prostitutes- are affected by nationalism" (53). She overgeneralizes the Park regime's nationalism without being context specific.

responsible for the popular misunderstanding. In Moon's case, all internal dynamics and the subsequent effects of the camptown clean-up campaign of the 1970s are explained through a fixed variable -the Nixon Doctrine and the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. troops in Korea. Although she identifies the camptown conflicts such as racial tension between African-American soldiers and local Koreans, high rates of venereal disease among U.S. servicemen and Korean prostitutes, unsanitary condition in the local R& R establishments and black markets (M. K 1998, 143-4) as one of main critical reasons for the clean-up campaign, the structural variables overshadow the simultaneous circumstances. I diverge from her stance on this point. Although the variable of the Nixon Doctrine is a critical factor in the development of camptowns and relevant policies, it is the schematic application of mechanical causal links where already existent internal dynamics and U.S policies are neglected, and at a theoretical level "the possibilities of any chance in the production of events" (Foucault 1972b, 231, Norton 2004) are foreclosed.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the slight misinterpretation of her analysis with reductionism to abstract state and sweeping depiction of Asian societies reinforces orientalist knowledge where a local nation-state re-emerges as a pivotal agent and a primary

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<sup>22</sup> Some Norton's theses on politics and methods are of use in understanding this point: Correlation does not establish causality; a statement of a causal relation is not a theory. Theory does not require causality; schemes of causality are narrative fictions driven illusionary personifications (such as state and market).

oppressor (Baker 2004, Zimelis 2009). Such a tricky reversal in knowledge formation is not new; this reversal happened (and is still happening) in the case of Korean comfort women under Japanese colonial rule as well (Hein 1999, M. Kim 2005a). With the overrepresentation of barbarism of the Japanese government in western context (Hein 1999), the invisibility of the role of the U.S. (Enloe 2000, 84, Tanaka 2002)<sup>23</sup> along with the Korean government's (strategic and patriarchal) long-held silence in the issue (Yang 1998) have been less taken into consideration.<sup>24</sup>

With such contexts in mind, I am more concerned with the local internal dynamics in this chapter: geopolitical development of camptowns and the (historical) governance between the U.S. military authorities and the Korean government, which influence women's activities and life styles. In addition, an analysis of U.S military bases overseas in terms of the existent policies on sex trade and historical evolution will be explored in order to overcome the "public, convenient misreading" of Korean exceptionalism on the government's involvement in the sex trade and subsequent relative negligence of the U.S. military authorities' ever-present role.

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<sup>23</sup> Tanaka (2002) pinpoints that in spite of the awareness of U.S. authorities in regards to the existence of Korean comfort women after the surrender of Japan in 1945, the authorities ignored the issue because the women were not white and through naturalized sex ideology (84-109).

<sup>24</sup> Despite a wide range of studies on comfort women ranging from testimonies to historical description, it has been quite difficult to differentiate spectacle from revelation in questioning Japanese colonialist systemic policies on the comfort women and human rights violations. For excellent works on this issue which do not fall into the sexualization of suffering, see Lee, Cheolhong, *Atrocities in Human Resources Plunder Committed by Japanese Imperialism in Korea*, 2005 and Jeong, Namyong, *Massive Crimes of the 20 Century Japanese Military Sexual Slavery*, 2004.

## 2. The Evolutionary Context of the Military Camptowns

With the image of sexualized and mixed space, camptowns have often been called “rootless island(s) between Korea and the U.S,” “a malformed society”<sup>25</sup> and “miscegenated space” (Maclear 1994-5). Such vocabularies in Korean nationalist and international imagination deter us from thinking that each camptown has its own specific developmental process and history as a military community.<sup>26</sup> In practice, main differences between militarized prostitution and general industrial prostitution on a macro-level are the governance of the U.S. military and the Korean government (Enloe 2000, N. Lee 2006, K. Moon 1997) as well as geographical isolation/feature of camptowns.

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<sup>25</sup> These expressions are from Korean popular literatures (M. Kim 2007).

<sup>26</sup> There are few literatures on the geopolitical aspect. A few Korean existing works focusing on such an aspect include: Kim, Jaesu, “A Socio-Geographical Study on Gijichon: A Case of Dongducheon-eup,” 1979, Kim, Joyoung, “A Geographical Study on Gijichon: A Case of Paju-gun,” 1978 and Lee, Seokgil, “A Study on Gijichon in Dalseong-eup in Pyeongtaek-gun,” 1985. Jiyeon Oh (1997) also provides a general background of Gosan-dong, Uijeongbu-si. Particularly, the three former studies have shared the same level of analysis focusing on the geographical, administrative and demographical transformation of villages in accordance with the establishment, withdrawal and relocation of the military bases. The assumptions of the women in the sex trade are not different from existing classed, patriarchal analysis where the women are subject to statistical materials. But their geopolitical approach provides us with another factual aspect of camptowns and sex trade especially in light of the local political economy.

“Gun (county)” and “Eup (town)” in the titles of the studies are the administrative units. The main reason for an elevation to a city is the increase of population and subsequent urbanization. The legal requirement to raise a city is fifty thousand. It was 1996 that Paju-gun was raised to a city. In 1981, Dongducheon-eup was raised to city. In the case of Pyeongtaek-si, the administrative change is complex compared to other areas. Songtan-eup, where Osan Air Base of K-55 was placed, was separated from Pyeongtaek-gun in 1981 by being elevated to a city and the others still remained the status of gun and eup. In 1986, Pyeongtaek-eup was elevated to a city, and Pyeongtaek-si, Songtan-si and Pyeongtaek-gun was eventually integrated into Pyeongtaek-si in 1995.

When I visited several camptowns, instead of disgraceful images of foreign hybrids, what primarily struck me was that the general structure of the local community, such as narrow aisles and the arrangement of houses, had been surprisingly unchanged since the 1970s when most of the infrastructure was built by the government. As all geographical studies of the camptowns have stated (J. Kim 1978, J. Kim 1979, S. Lee 1985, J. Oh 1997), a visible feature, critical to the women's work and life, is the structure of residence which is different from the general local houses: The houses for women in the sex trade are highly populated in comparison with the dimension of building. In order to maximize the number of rooms, the houses consisted of several small rooms. Since most women did not make their meals by themselves, there was no need for a kitchen. Thus the complex had many rooms but no more than one or two kitchens (S. Lee 1985, 18-20).<sup>27</sup> In the cases of Gosan-dong and Gwangam-dong, the geographical isolation where a camptown adjacent to U.S. bases was surrounded by mountains, was noticeable. Another infamous bar street in Bosan-dong, which was one of the now prosperous camptowns, was not as huge a place as I expected. The personal impressions were reinforced by the fact that due to

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<sup>27</sup> It is said that originally in camptowns, houses with many rooms appeared with the purpose of accommodating refugees and immigrants after the social unrest of the War (S. Lee 1985).

With respect to household arrangements among the women, according to Chun Kim's study (1975), 75.1% of the women in Anjeong-ri were independent home-based workers (jachui; lodging house), 19% worked in brothels, and 5% worked in clubs. Women residing in brothels or clubs are rare these days. Even though women work in clubs, they have their own residence/usually rented rooms (J. Lee 2002).

the general decrease of the scale of U.S. troops in these camptowns, the booming of gijichon of from the 60s-70s even until the early 1990s interviewees testified were not recognized. Anjeong-ri, Pyeongtaek-si and Bosan-dong, Uijeongbu-si, where immigrant women replaced Korean women, were comparatively booming. Recently, some transformations of the terrain in the camptowns have been underway since 2004 when the two governments negotiated and decided on the closing, relocating, and withdrawing of troops. Due to the recent relocation of Yongsan Garrison in Seoul, Camp Humphreys was expected to grow and become the largest installation in Korea. Thus when I visited Anjeong-ri, many building constructions were underway around the base. Seonnyu-ri in Paju-si was also undergoing the similar transformation.<sup>28</sup> However the undergoing transformation did not seem to largely affect the general structure of local communities. Especially in Seonnyu-ri, many empty houses were rather noticeable (ever since Camp Giant was closed in 2004 and only three clubs are open as of 2007; interview with a club owner).

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<sup>28</sup> Giordono, Joseph, "US Troops to Leave Seoul by 2007," *Stars and Strips*, January 20, 2004; Weaver, Teri. "Seven Bases Scheduled to Close in Korea in 2005," *Ibid.*, May 8, 2005; Baker III, Fred W. "Transformation Underway in South Korea." *Ibid.*, June 22, 2007.





**Photo 1: A shopping area<sup>29</sup>**



**Photo 2: A clothes store<sup>30</sup>**

<sup>29</sup> All of these photos were taken by me as I visited the various camptowns.

<sup>30</sup> This photo needs some explanations: It reinforces the image of a camptown as a sexualized space. This store was the only establishment placed in the middle of a residential area without an awning. The store caught my interest because of the aesthetic visibility in the middle of a quiet residential area with no other businesses. The store symbolically revealed the dynamic of work in camptowns and gave off an aesthetically cheerful mood at the same time.



**Photo 3: A residential area**

Military bases are literally “installations routinely used by military forces” (Blaker 1990, 4), but they also include barracks and weapons depots and staging areas for war-making, land and capital in the forms of static facilities, supplies and equipment (Calder 2007, 65, Lutz 2009, 4) and even further imply a garrison community in host societies called “gijichon” in Korea.

Most U.S. military bases were established at the end of the Second World War or the early 1950s and remained in place until the early 1990s or later (Baker 2004). The roles and reasons for overseas military bases include: deterring aggression, reinforcing alliance relations, inhibiting balance of power conflict, providing formidably efficient global logistics networks, assuring smooth resource flows, and

helping most recently to combat terrorism (Calder 2007, 1).<sup>31</sup> It is said that as of 2008, 190,000 U.S. troops and 115,000 civilian employees are massed in 909 military facilities in 46 countries and territories (Lutz 2009, 1). In Korea, as of 2008, there are 24,655 servicemen<sup>32</sup> in 106 sites<sup>33</sup> for the military security in relation to North Korea.

In the meantime, *gijichon*, in Korean, literally refers to a village surrounding the military bases which are built up for their political and military necessity. In fact, the history of the presence of U.S. troops dates back to after the liberation from Japanese colonization in 1945.<sup>34</sup> However, during the U.S. Army Military Government (1945-49), camptowns in Bupyeong and Yongsan were nothing but primitive since most

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<sup>31</sup> See Baker 2004, Blaker 1990, Calder 2007, Cooley 2005, Harkavy 2005, Lutz 2009 and Sandars 2000 for the general history and issues of the U.S. overseas basing.

<sup>32</sup> The Statistical Information Analysis Division, SIAD of the Directorate for Information Operations and Reports in the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) makes the scale of military personnel publicly available at this web <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/index.html>.

Only 51 servicemen were based in Korea in 1950, prior to the War. The DOD records show that 326,863 troops were deployed in Korea in 1953, a number that stabilized between 50,000 and 60,000 in the 1960s and 1970s. A slow drawdown continued as troops averaged 40,000 in the 1980s and 35,000 in the 1990s (Kane, Tim, "Global U.S. Troop Development 1950-2003," 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Lutz, Catherine, *The Bases of Empires*, 2009, 39.

<sup>34</sup> Historically the cities Jinhae and Gunsan in the Southern province of Korea were exemplary camptowns during Japanese colonial rule. The U.S. military facilities and installations were not only established after the station of UN/U.S. troops in 1945, but were also originally used for Japanese military installations. For example, Yongsan Garrison in Seoul which has housed the U.S. Forces Korean headquarters, the U.N. Command and the Combined Forces Command, was also once the headquarters for the Japanese Imperial Army, which will be relocated to Pyeongtaek-si by 2008 (The plan of relocation was postponed by 2019). The first U.S. military camptown in Korea, Bupyeong, a port city of Incheon, was established and used as a supply depot and arsenal station for the Japanese troops in the mid 1930s. The U.S. used that area for Army Support Command Korea, which most facilities withdrew/relocated in 1971 (Seoul Newspaper Co., 1979). Camp Hialeah in Busan was also one of the bases for the Japanese Imperial Army. It was reportedly named during World War II for the well-known horse racing track. Upon the withdrawal of the occupation force from the area in 1945, the American Consulate and the United Nations Organization utilized the facilities. After 1953, Hialeah was used to house troops of the Korean Communications Zone. With acquisition of additional property over the next several years, Hialeah was enlarged to its present size and used to permanently house US Military personnel; <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/camp-hialeah.htm>

camptowns disappeared after the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 1949. It was during the Korean War (1950-53) and the U.S.-ROK (Republic of Korea) Mutual Defense Treaty, legal consent to a foreign military presence, which was taken into effect in 1954 (S. Lee 1987). This led to the formation and lasting preservation of camptowns. Camp Casey and Camp Hovey in Dongducheon-si were all established in the early 1950s. Camp Stanley in Uijeongbu-si began as an unnamed tent city in 1955.<sup>35</sup>

As for camptowns in Korea, there were 62 camptowns in 1977 and 32 in 1984.<sup>36</sup> The recent number of military bases is not precise since the number is different depending on the source. According to the Land Partnership Plan in the document of GAO (United States General Accounting Office) in 2003, 37,000 troops scattered across 41 troop installations and additional 54 small camps and support sites and the military bases will be reorganized into 23 bases by 2011. The Korean Department of Defense reported 92 bases in 2004. According to the US Department of Base Structure of Report of Defense, they numbered 101 bases in 2004. Green Korea United & Coalition Movement for Reclaiming Land occupied by US troops estimates more than 94 bases and facilities in 2004.<sup>37</sup> The discrepancy seems due in part to the

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/>

<sup>36</sup> For 1977 figure, "Gijichon Clean Up Policies" produced by President Secretariat on May 2, 1977; for 1984 figure, "New Gijichon Formation Policies (the case of Yecheon-gun, Chungnam Province)" by the Blue House and Ministry of Home Affairs in 1984 (Those two documents are from National Archives and Records Service in Korea).

<sup>37</sup> Green Korea United, "Current Situation of U.S. Armed Forces Stationed in Korea," 2005; <http://usacrime.or.kr/maybbs/view.php?db=us&code=english&n=25&page=3>

question of whether small support sites and camps are to include or not as well as current ongoing relocation and mergence. More fundamentally, it seems due to the fact that any official numbers of the military facilities in use are underrepresented because military authorities seek to minimize public knowledge and resources by reducing the number of troops, covered acreage, dollar values of installations, or even counts of all facilities within a certain geographic radius (Lutz 2009, 39).

Geographically, most of the military bases and the camptowns are in isolated areas in the Northern part of Gyeonggi-do and several are near the demilitarized zone. Busan and Gusan<sup>38</sup> in Jeollanam-do, Southern province of Korea, have held the bases. Busan, Gunsan, Dongducheon and Songtan are most prosperous and infamous gijichons throughout history. Current popular camptowns, Paju, Dongducheon, and Paengseong-eup (Anjeong-ri) in Gyeonggi-do where I visited, used to be typical agricultural villages until the War. During the period of 1945-60, Korea underwent a mass rural-urban immigration and the population of the urban community doubled. Some industrialization occurred but rural poverty induced many to move to the

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<sup>38</sup> American Town nicknamed silver town for women in the sex trade in Gunsan is well known for the construction through cooperation of the government and the regional corporation in early-mid 1970s, which own and manage the business practice (I. An 1993, K. Moon 1997, 18). The place was originally supposed to be used for a chicken ranch to local people. Thus local people who sold land at a low price were enraged after finding out the place was for prostitutes. However as development such as paving roads and rural electrification went on, resistance died down (I. An 1993). This place is also notorious for hard work environments coupled with many of the women's suicides (Y. Kim 2005, interviews) and geographical isolation from nearby villages. According to an interviewee, when she came to work in the town, she couldn't stay a week because of rumors of female ghosts and weird environments.

metropolitan areas and to places where U.S military forces were located (Boyer and Ahn 1991, 53). In the case of Anjeong-ri, the airfield which has been placed in Camp Humphreys was originally constructed by the Japanese in 1939 and was known as the Pyeongtaek Airfield during the War. It was called K-6 when the US Air Force repaired it. Not until 1951 did the area really start to transform into a camptown after the US air force K-6 military base (Camp Humphreys) was set up. The villagers were composed of local civilian employees of the base, comfort women and small-scale businessmen (S. Lee 1985). The establishments of the shantytowns were very poor and it was hard to expect any administrative support from the government. Many interviewees recalled the poor environmental situations: “There were nothing, public cemeteries are all over here,” “It is called just ilgopjibmae (7 households)” and “There was a saying here that people could live without wives but couldn’t live without rubber boots (since the streets were unpaved).”

As I noted, the War and the subsequent station of U.S troops transformed some villages, mostly agricultural communities into camptowns whose economy was based on mostly commercial services. The gijichon areas are predominantly composed of service-oriented industries which provide entertainment, leisure, and consumption to military personnel (S. Lee 1985, 1). The main functions of camptowns include: service-oriented functions to entertain servicemen during their off-duty time,

commercial functions to provide daily clothes and furniture, medical functions for soldiers' family, providing labor power, and cultural functions to bridge the cultures between two countries (S. Lee 1985, 9). People and business establishments involved in the sex trade industry, clubs, coffee house, dance halls, dollar sellers, brothel keepers, pimps, and hustlers compose the next circle of camptowns. It also includes other relevant businesses such as laundromats, hair shops, grocery stores, cosmetic shops, tailor shops, souvenir stalls, portrait shops, and offices for international marriages (Moon 1997, 17-8).

The sex trade between local women and GIs is at the center of the complex economy in camptowns. By the 1960s-70s when camptowns were systematically regulated by the state, the essence of the economy of these special clubs in the camptowns was based on tax free drinks. This was initiated by Korea Special Tourist Association (hereafter KSTA). KSTA is a special status corporation established in 1964. The member enterprises of KSTA engage in special tourist businesses which serve the U.S. forces as well as the foreign crewman staying in Korea. The KSTA has argued that because "special" tourist business is a kind of "hospitality industry," it should be promoted and protected for the purpose of foreign currency earning and the improvement of the Korea-U.S. friendship, and national security (KSTA Newsletter

1985-1991).<sup>39</sup> In 1996, KSTA began lobbying the government for the right to bring immigrant women. With the government's authorization, foreign entertainers with E-6 visas (entertainer visas) were allowed to immigrate to Korea (IOM 2007).

It is well known that there are three stratifications of the sex trade in camptowns. The first is the freelance sex worker, or home-based sex worker (which is usually called "hitbbari" original Japanese word referring to pulling someone). The second group is women working in clubs as waitresses, hostesses, bartenders, and dancers living in rooms at the clubs. The club owner is usually called "poju" (brothel keeper; literally meaning a house owner of a house with many rooms). There were "jachui poju" or individual brothel keepers<sup>40</sup> who provided residences to the women. Finally, the third group is characterized by longer cohabitation terms with the GIs; this group is called "key women" (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, 306) or contract marriages. The third stratification group is based on longer live-in terms similar to the marriage relationship. These women either married the GIs or the GIs left after their duty. Most women I interviewed had children with the GIs and in most cases their children were adopted in the United States. Since the relationship is financially more stable, they did not need to work in clubs or do freelance; this live-in arrangement was considered to

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<sup>39</sup> This newsletter was published in 1985 first, and 1991 was the last volume available in National Congress Library in Korea; each newsletter composes of interviews with a club owner and main business plans and lecture of servicemen education for hospitality industry.

<sup>40</sup> Such terms as hitbbari, poju and jachui poju are not pervasive and popular any longer. But because these have been used when most interviewees were/have been working in sex industry (around until the mid 1990s), I put them in such a historical context.



be at the higher end of the sex trade (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992). However, it is critical to note that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the stratifications because most women had gone through it their whole lives. The stratification also includes legal marriage in many cases, which will be addressed in chapter 4.

The second stratification of the sex trade is well known and is most notorious for economic exploitation based on the “debt bondage system.” Specific situations of this type of sex trade such as the work environment/situation, the debt bondage system, the exploitation of (or relationship to) workers by brothel keepers and club owners, the drink (quota) and bar fine system, and the woman’s lifestyle are well documented in existing literature (K. Moon 1997, O. Pak 1965, Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, Yea 2005). Many themes are relatively repetitive and familiar accounts (S. Kim 1997, Y. Kim 2005, K. Moon 1997, J. Oh 1997, O. Park 1965, Interviews): the addiction of drugs, (short term) cohabitation with GIs, imprisonment, debts, VD (venereal disease) examinations, boredom at detention centers for failing the sexual disease examinations, episodes of contact tracing/identification, violence against women by U.S. servicemen including murder, women’s suicide for various reasons, tension for the payment between women and GI customers, work environments from learning English to interpersonal relationships among colleagues, and U.S. military authorities’

irresponsibility on the violence against women and episodes with American customers/partners.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to the economic system of clubs, in most camptown clubs, the club owner was also the brothel keeper until the early 1990s. That is, the club owner not only sells (tax free) drinks with the permission of a special tourist club but is also involved with the sex trade. In actuality, the income from women in the sex trade is higher than selling drinks. On the other hand, an individual brothel owner is a person who is only involved in sex trade. The only difference between the individual brothel keeper and the club brothel keeper is whether or not they sell drinks (S. Kim 1991, 72). As stated, most women began their club work with debt because of an agency fee, advance pay, or for equipments such as bedroom, cosmetics, and clothes. As Sanghi Pak (46) addressed, “We had debt even though they live outside (brothels). It was the debt for rent, meal etc... We were the same. If people were at the halls, they were able to go out to the hall, but people who did not have halls went to different clubs and did freelance... Almost everyone had debt.” One elderly informant recalled the economic hardship she faced even though she had a long-term relationship with a GI: “I couldn’t make any money even if I lived with a US soldier. If I dress up, they

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<sup>41</sup> Because of the variety of individual women’s experiences, it is hard to generalize any of the accounts. In addition, how they recognize the experiences is another issue to be discussed. However limiting accounts to sex trade experiences, I could confirm such repetitive, familiar ones which are not different from accounts in existing literature.

follow me, but it just didn't work out financially. Even if they pay for the rent, it wasn't enough to live. I was always in debt. I don't know how, but I lived a weird life back then. But it wasn't only me, but everyone lived like that." According to Sanghi Pak aforementioned, the current drink system (it refers to getting commission according to the drinks the women sell to customers in addition to a monthly salary) was introduced in late 1980s in Gosan-dong, and before then they "just sold body" (in Pak's sarcastic term) where most of the income went to the poju. Within such a system, most had little opportunity to save money although it does not mean they had never saved money. Chun Kim (1965) presented the exploitation of poju, luxury, and a support family, among others, as main reasons for low earning. According to Hisuk Lee (1991), the reasons for low earning were precarious/unstable income, family support, no temperance, medical expenses, and money advances from the start.

More recent replacement of immigrant women since late 1990s has caused a fundamental change of economic systems in camptowns (Baek 1999, Yea 2004, 205). The role of the KSTA in this transformation was mentioned earlier. The management agencies, both in Philippines and Korea, are new important parts. With regard to the economic system within clubs, the most critical difference is the regular monthly salary which some Korean women I interviewed pinpointed as one of the differences between one another. It was also noticeable that immigrant women had their own

residences, unlike the past where most Korean women's residences were in the brothels in which the women wielded some relative freedom (IOM 2007).<sup>42</sup>

Chronologically speaking,<sup>43</sup> it is well known that it was in 1960s-70s that camptowns enjoyed the most prosperous periods along with systematic involvement between the U.S. military authorities and the Korean government. Newspaper articles since 1945 illustrate that numerous incidents such as murder, sexual violence against women, and suicide in camptowns were continually reported until 1970s, and the intensity of the incidents during the periods confirms that the period was the heyday of camptowns. Also the women's visible demonstrations were most active during this period of time. Their demonstrations were mainly against the alleged GI murders of

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<sup>42</sup> The difference between Korean women and immigrant women focusing on self-recognition and identity will be discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>43</sup> The following chronological characteristics are agreed in public and academic sphere: 1945-1950s: Transformation (from militarized prostitution for Japanese troops) into U.S. military camptowns after liberation from Japanese colonialist rule in 1945; 1950~53 - late 1960s: Spread of military camptowns; Early 1970s-mid 1980s: State Regulation of camptowns; Late 1980s-mid 1990s: Proliferation of industrial prostitution in a whole society (or into the military camptowns). After the mid 1990s: Replacement to immigrant women (Source: Hong 2007 with some slight changes).

But there is a discrepancy on the sex trade in 1980s: Due to the reduction of the U.S. troops, the scale of the sex trade industry in camptowns has decreased since the 1980s. The 1980s characterized the commoditization of sexuality and the diversification of the sex industry in Korea. While the traditional sex trade means to confine districts, the industrial sex trade is a practiced sex trade with more varying forms and establishments such as massage parlors, bathhouses, etc. all over the country (Shin 1993). But with the basis of the agreed recognition of this, some argue that the diversification of industrial prostitution proliferate into the camptowns (Hong 2007, H. Kim 2004). From my reviews of materials on the 1980s (I. Yun 1987) and interviews I got from my fieldwork, the stratification, forms of sex trade which will be further depicted later are not various until the late 1990s due to geographical isolation which would be one more critical factor to support this. The argument of penetration of varying forms of industrial prostitution into the camptowns seems to be made in the process of schematic application of industrial prostitution.

Korean women and off-limits designations and exploitations of club owners (K. Moon 159-168, Y. Kim 2005, interviews).<sup>44</sup>

The largest camptown during the 1960-70s which was the heyday of camptowns was Dongducheon which was nicknamed “Little Chicago” (due to the violence and racial conflicts between black and white soldiers) (Seoul Newspaper Co. 1979, Yuh 2002, 21-2) and Songtan, the “City of Pleasure,” which contained 14 special entertainment establishments such as cabarets and 25 coffee houses (In addition, such special establishments, bathhouses, hotels and inns started to emerge).<sup>45</sup> As one title of a newspaper shows,<sup>46</sup> those camptowns began to transform the social function of the camptown from a military foothold to an international tourist place (In actuality, Dongducheon and Songtan became special tourism district in 1997). More specifically, an estimated, 60 % of the Korean population of Uijeongbu-si in the early 1970 were engaged in some form of business catering to the U.S. military. In Songtan, by the late 1970s, 80% of its 60,000 residents, including approximately 2, 500 prostitutes, lived on income earned from U.S. military personnel (K. Moon 1997, 29). In Dongducheon in the late 1970s, it was populated by only 10 % of native local people with 3,500 prostitutes, there were 27 halls, 84 inns, 30 coffee houses, and 69

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<sup>44</sup> “Prostitutes’ Protest (in Texas street, Busan) against Vicious Club Owner’s Exploitation” *Chosun Ilbo*, June 22, 1960; “Why Should They (Women in the sex trade in Itaewon) Protest?” *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 27, 1960 (People protested the death of a woman caught in the middle of the U.S. authorities’ crackdown).

<sup>45</sup> “Songtan: a Fast-Growing Gijichon after the Korean War,” *Chosun Ilbo*, March 3, 1977.

<sup>46</sup> “Dongducheon,” *Chosun Ilbo*, March 6, 1977.

hairshops (Seoul Newspaper Co. 1979, 439-40). The Paju area northwest of Seoul, which is militarily important due to its proximity to the DMZ, contained the highest concentration of U.S. troops. A newspaper article in 1961 says that Yongjugol (Yeonpung-ri) in Paju-si contained 20 dance halls, 30 coffee houses, and 1,000 women in the sex trade.<sup>47</sup> It is well known that until 1971 when the 7<sup>th</sup> infantry division withdrew and the 2<sup>nd</sup> division infantry relocated to Dongducheon, it was known as the “GI’s Kingdom” (Yuh 2002).

The scale and figures of the women in the sex trade are not precise in reality, as is well known, because unregistered women and minors have been not included. The book, *History of Woman Administration for Forty Years* (1987) by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Korea puts the intensity of the sex trade in Gyeonggi-do followed by the high concentration of the bases: “As of 1946, the main task with reference to women’s administration was the eradication of licensed prostitution in Gyeonggi-do and the number of the licensed prostitutes numbered 1,153. After the promulgation of the abolition of licensed prostitution (of 1948) the number fell into 709. After the Korean War, *gijichon* and the question of moral guidance of prostitutes emerged as serious problems. Since the scale of the UN’s station was the biggest in Gyeonggi-do, the number of comfort women was on an increase. In May 1953, half of

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<sup>47</sup> “The Formation of Camptown in Paju,” *Chosun Ilbo*, October 21, 1961.

the country's prostitutes, which amounted to 3,478, were concentrated in Gyeonggi-do" (1987, 371-8). The number of registered women in Gyeonggi-do was 12,294 in 1965, 11,440 in 1966, 9,707 in 1967, and 11,209 in 1968. Due to continual moral guidance, the number of the women fell into 5,335 in the late 1979. The number of special districts in 1962, when these districts were first established, was 61 and increased to 90 in 1968 (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1987, 379). Given the fact that it was almost impossible to find out systematic, chronological scale of the women through existing materials, I only present Anjeong-ri in order to show the general stream of the scale: Registered Korean women in Anjeong-ri numbered 1,109 in 1973, 730 in 1977, 550 in 1985, and 59 in 2007.<sup>48</sup>

With respect to the question of sex trade in camptowns, the period of the Park regime witnessed the most conspicuously condensed nature of sex trade in terms of medicalization of women's bodies and subsequent institutional support (N. Lee 2006, K. Moon 1997). Based on the logic of state-led industrialization (labor intensive export promotion of 1961-72 and industrial deepening of 1973-79; Haggard and Moon 1993) which was based on cheap human labor (Cronstadt and Tov 1978), the intensive policies of the Korean government in relation to the women in the sex trade in camptowns include: the establishment of 104 special districts of prostitution in

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<sup>48</sup> For figure of 1973, C. Kim 1975; for figure of 1977, President Secretariat 1977; for figure of 1985, Na 1989; for figure of 2007, SSC.

1962 in spite of the Prostitution Prevention Law in 1961, active promotion of gisaeng (professional entertainer) tourism, and intensive state-regulated camptown clean-up campaign during early 1970s focusing on the suppression of VD rates. The Park regime promulgated the Prostitution Prevention Law in 1961. However, in 1962, the Korean government established “special districts” which effectively legalized prostitution. By 1964, the number had increased to 145, and 60 % of them (89 areas) were located in Gyeonggi-do where American soldiers were most heavily concentrated (K. Moon 1997, 42). It was a public system of certifying and licensing sexual workers, including regular health checkup and periodic lectures. Simultaneously, active promotion of gisaeng tourism through the Tourism Promotion Law 1961 was made. Control over individual gisaengs was maintained by the KCIA (the Korea Central Intelligence Agency). Prostitution got around this restriction by issuing “health cards” to all registered gisaeng. In order to maintain international “tourism standards,” gisaeng were required to undergo periodic examinations for venereal diseases as well as investigations of their ideological loyalty. In addition, gisaengs must show their health cards whenever they enter a hotel with a man. The health card system is a method of maintaining control over gisaeng by keeping them separate and competing against each other (Cronstadt and Tov 1978, 59).



The camptown clean-up movement during the 1970s (1971-76) is also well known for the government's intensive, systematic regulation. "The concrete programs consisted of increasing the registration of women, enforcement of regular VD examinations, improved examination and treatment techniques, construction and renovations of VD clinics and detention centers, efforts to reduce the numbers of streetwalkers, and cooperation with U.S. military authorities on contact identification" (K. Moon 1997, 97). By using materials from minutes of the SOFA Joint Committee and minutes of the AD Hoc Subcommittee on Civil-Military Relations, as I have noted, Moon interprets the motivations in conducting the clean-up movement of the government in the context of two state's power relations in terms of the Nixon Doctrine. What is neglected at this point is that from the point of view of the local state, the camptown clean-up movement is an effort to regulate the poor as another aspect of the "social management" with an "enthusiasm for state intervention into the lives of the unrespectable poor" (Walkowitz 1980, 3, Allen 1984, Garon 1993). In analyzing the British Contagious Disease Acts in 1860s, Walkowitz (1980) reminds us that through the control of sexuality, the acts reinforce existing patterns of class and gender domination: "It assumed heightened scatological significance in a society where the poor seemed to be living in their own excrement, and where the first programmatic attempt to deal with urban social problems was in the realm of sanitary

engineering” (4). In the Korean case, the period of 1970s witnessed rapid urbanization which accompanied rural-urban migration (S. Kim 1985, Spencer 1988), and government initiated family plans as well as the emergence of a new middle class (Cronstadt and Tov 1978, H. Park 1973).<sup>49</sup> It is important to remind that the law (the Prostitution Prevention Law) included “provisions for the institutionalization of ‘potential prostitutes,’ namely, poverty-stricken women, single mothers, runaway girls, and other vagrants, in accommodation centers, and vocation schools” (K. Moon 1997, 42, President Secretariat 1977). Hustlers and drug dealers in camptowns were also subject to intensive crackdowns during the period of time. In a similar context, another important aspect of the clean-up campaign as a way of state-level control was the idea of “social purification”: Apart from intensive control over women’s bodies through mandatory checkups, contact tracing/identification, it substantiated environmental purification of the camptowns and the reduction of the black-market including drugs and heroine (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978, President Secretariat 1977). While the question of prevention and venereal disease control, and

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<sup>49</sup> Cronstadt and Tov in *Multinational Sex* (1978) presented the emergence of new middle class in the 1970s. Although the study is rather descriptive and fragmentary, it well pinpointed the systematic emergence of new middle class along with industrial capitalism, urbanization and governmental support for the spread of the nuclear family in the 1970s, which are little discussed in existing literature (There are few studies on new middle class of 1970s with extremely rare exception such as Park, Hyungcho, “The New Middle Class in Korea,” 1973). But ironically the pervasiveness of “sigmo, domestic helper” which was one of the most common jobs of young female at the time confirms the emergence of a new middle class. I will discuss the necessary relationship of the conjugal family and a nation-state at a theoretical level in chapter 3. It is also critical to consider the “practical development” of middle class in the context of social management and sex trade, which needs further research.

concomitant control of drugs and violence in camptowns was centered on the early periods of 1970s for the purpose of “social purification,”<sup>50</sup> an environmental development project in the late periods of 1970s was more intensively focused as part of the Saemaul Undong (the New Community Movement)<sup>51</sup> along with the control of venereal disease under the three year plan (1977-79) (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978). In actuality, the case of camptowns by Ministry of Home Affairs in 1978 was presented as part of the Saemaul Movement in this book, *Saemaul Undong and the Preservation of Nature* by Park, Chunghee: 1. Objects - a) to improve camptowns by renovating living environments; b) to manage stable living and the dissolution of anxiety followed by the withdraw of U.S troops by softening local people’s spirit and by making wholesome camptowns. 2. Specific plans - a) improvement of living

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<sup>50</sup> An official gazette, entitled “Gijichon Clean-up Policies” on October 30, 1972 and issued by the Martial Law Enforcement Headquarters, presents its objects and politics: Objects - to eradicate degrading social morale and venereal disease, drug convicts around camptowns; Policies - a) to tackle drugs, drug convicts and suppliers; b) to remove purveyors of venereal disease; c) to get rid of potential criminals; Measures - a) Drug convicts are to imprison in principle; b) Contractors of venereal disease are to treat completely.

<sup>51</sup> During the Park regime, while two five-year economic plans which emphasized industrialization over agriculture and rural development, the third five year plan (1972-77) emphasized the development of agriculture, self-sufficiency in food production, increase in farmer’s income, and improvement of rural living conditions. A main objective of the Saemaul Movement is to create a healthy, rational, and productive rural environment. Projects underway throughout the country are categorized as follows: improvement of village roads sewage systems, roofs and walls; installation of water and methane gas facilities, and of village construction network; expansion of farming roads; construction of community laundry facilities, community halls, and model rural housing units; creation of common sanitary wells; preservation of community cultural assets; electrification of rural villages; anti-erosion and afforestation projects; and beautification of highways, towns and villages, tourist resorts and streams. In 1973, the movement became a national movement and expanded to urban, factory, school, and militaries. The major emphasis of the New Community Movement had shifted from village and intervillage environmental improvement projects in the early 1970s to income increasing projects in the late 1970s, and finally to welfare-inducing projects in the 1980s (Boyer and Ahn 1976, 50-2).

environment: improvement of roads, households, markets, and water supplies; b)

(moral) guidance of prostitutes and enlightenment of local people.<sup>52</sup>

The policies on camptowns seem to stabilize during the Chun Doohwan regime

(1981-87) in 1980s within the Saemaul Movement. Focus seems to be changed from

VD control to development business. According to a Korean broadcast (MBC 2003),

the Chun regime carried out the five year plan of *gijichon*.<sup>53</sup> A document in 1984

entitled “New *Gijichon* Formation Policies” by the Blue House and Ministry of Home

Affairs from National Archives and Records Service in Korea<sup>54</sup> presents the threefold

aims of camptown renovations as follows: 1) To carry out renovation of camptowns

as redevelopment business considering developmental priority. 2) To prioritize

backward areas before forward areas<sup>55</sup> (to focus on village structure and

environmental improvement; to enlarge express highways and national highways

connected to *gijichons*; to intensively develop the housing facilities; to utilize

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<sup>52</sup> It specifies the following: For prostitutes -intensive education is to execute by utilizing educational equipments such as movies and slide more than four times in a week. The contents of intensive education and practices (examples) include: a. prevention of venereal diseases, the effects of venereal disease on women’s health and necessity of regular check-ups and necessary common knowledge of the prevention of venereal disease; b. the improvement of prostitutes’ quality via basic English education; c. encouragement of saving, diligence and thrift, recycling and saving of electricity; d. eradication of denigrating social mores such as drugs.

<sup>53</sup> Since specific explanations were not made in the broadcast, I attempted to trace more materials for the plan. But they were no further sources on the subject.

<sup>54</sup> This was the only available document in 1980s from National Archives and Records Service in Korea presenting the governmental official view on camptown: On the first page added the governmental official position on camptowns in a document regarding compensation for land in the process of camptown development in a case of Yecheon-gun, a camptown.

<sup>55</sup> Songtan, Gunsan, Songha, Waegwan, Pyeongtaek, Uijeongbu-si are in order.

Saemaul organizations for improvement of prostitute's rights and interests, and enlightenment). 3) To carry out renovations so that foreign troops can come back to their home countries with a good impression of Korea. As such the development of camptowns during this period remained basically the same as that of the former Park regime but kept focusing on environmental improvement through "(re)development" strategies rather than VD control which was the foremost priority in the earlier clean-up movement in 1970s. Similarly, a newsletter of the KSTA of 1986 presents club owners' four main business plans as follows: promotion to club business, an improvement of Korean-U.S. soldiers' friendships, business for foreign exchange earning, and active participation in the Saemaul Movement (1986 winter, 11).

Again the Nixon Doctrine was a critical variable in developing the camptown clean-up movement in the 1970s. However this variable does not explain the fundamental relevance of social management such as intervention into the poor and the context of development strategy later, from two governments' perspective. This becomes clearer when we focus on the U.S. policies and the Korean government's contradictory policies on sex trade. I, therefore, turn to a historical context of policies.

Korean feminists Hyeong Cho and Pilhwa Chang's 1990 study of the Korean National Assembly's stenographic records on prostitution from 1948 to 1989, categorizes the governmental policies on sex trade into the following four types:

ambiguous (simple remarks on sex trade without alternatives), conservative (considering it as individual problems, recommended police crackdown, rigid enforcement of law), instrumental (on the basis of the existence of prostitution, recommended to promote it for nation's economic and political interests), and progressive (considering it as social-structural problems and interests in suppression of prostitution and humanistic interests in the women). According to their analysis from 1950s-1970s on U.S. militarized prostitution, the instrumental nature to promote the sex trade with some policies are insistent and the most noticeable. Such policies are proper education, prevention of sexual disease, guarantee of identification of U.S. military comfort women, improvement of etiquette and good conduct, and prevention of VD (even during 1948-61). They pinpoint that after the 1980s, the discussion on the issue itself decreased (Ibid., 106). Lastly they conclude that ambiguous, instrumental, and conservative views share a conventional root that reveals the double standard of sexuality. Such standards are justified by human nature, considering prostitution as a necessary evil, yet women in the sex trade are seen as a social problem subject to crackdowns and punishments (Ibid., 107). More recently, N. Lee (2006), borrowing Cho's and Chang's terms, generalize the historical development in terms of policies into tacit permission (1950s), permissive promotion (1960s) to active support (1970s-80s).

However the key point here with regard to the state intervention into the sex trade is that the state approaches prostitution in two “contradictory” but well-established ways, however elaborate the linguistic revision may be. Sunder Rajan (2003) nicely points out this:

First, for the patriarchal state, prostitution serves as an instance of deviant or criminal female sexuality, to be placed under surveillance and control by its instruments, the police, the courts, and social welfare bodies. At the same time, prostitution also serves what is generally viewed as an incessant and urgent male sexual need, especially in the absence of or in excess of marital or “legitimate” sex. Therefore, it is safeguarded in more or less overt ways for the economy, either as sex trade that furthers national tourism and other leisure industries and is prompted by the state (even if it may disavow any such association), or as a part of the vast informal labor sector, predominantly occupied by women workers, that remains unprotected by wage or labor legislation despite its substantial contribution to the economy. (119; emphasis in original)

The licensed prostitution transplanted in Korea under the Japanese colonial rule in 1916 was outlawed during the U.S. military government (1945-48) under the name of a democratic viewpoint of gender equality (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1987).<sup>56</sup> Unlike the Park regime there is little documentation about how the Korean government and U.S. authorities were involved and managed during early stationing of the troops and during the wartime mostly due to lack of sources. I found only one article in a newspaper<sup>57</sup> saying that in order to compensate U.S. troops to fight against

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<sup>56</sup> See Yang 2001 for the context of the outlaw of the licensed prostitution during the U.S. military government, 1945-49.

<sup>57</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, December 14, 1945.

Japanese imperial army, the bank of Joseon (bank under Japanese colonial rule) building was transformed into the comfort station for the UN, U.S. troops, and managed by the American Red Cross. The detailed situations, for example, on the scale and specific process of comfort stations by the Red Cross have not been found. But it would be safe to say that the U.S. military authorities were always managed systematically with the cooperation of the Korean government and the Red Cross even earlier than the War.<sup>58</sup> During the War, the Korean government did not attempt to enforce the anti-prostitution laws and legal recognition of prostitution had taken place through the licensing of prostitutes, the institution of periodic physical examinations and the issuance of health (McNinch 1954, 147). Imha Lee (2006), a Korean historian, demonstrates that during wartime, the Korean government established comfort stations, and legalized prostitution as a countermeasure against sexual violence committed by the U.S, the UN and Korean soldiers. The reasons for the establishment of comfort stations were the protection of common women from U.S. servicemen, gratefulness to UN forces for fighting for a free Korea, and elevation of the morale of the soldiers. These comfort stations were divided into those for the UN soldiers and special comfort squads for Korean soldiers by the clients' nationality. Also, the stations were managed by two groups: civilians permitted by the

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<sup>58</sup> See MacDonald 1957 and Davidson 2004.



government and businessmen under the control of the Army. The government collected taxes from licensed brothel keepers and the women (Ibid., 98-102). Woods (2001), a serviceman in early 1960s in Korea, highlights a contradiction as such: “All of the prostitutes were forced to pay taxes on their illegal income by the South Korea Government.”

With historical changes ranging from unspoken approval, active regulation to active promotion in conjunction with the cooperation of the local government and community, the official policy of the U.S military authorities on sex trade is always suppression: “All houses of prostitution” are formally “off-limits” to military personnel in Korea.<sup>59</sup> Again, like the Korean government’s approach, albeit the difference in the extent and range, “regulation (of prostitution) was ‘always’ the policy of the U.S. military overseas. Wherever it went to combat ‘foreign’ threats, the U.S. military instituted prostitution regulation throughout the pre-World War I period” (Briggs 2003a, 50). That is, the official policy of the military authorities overseas is not to allow its troops to use prostitutes regardless of their location, but to take varying preventative measures to prevent sexual diseases among the forces stationed overseas. For example, from the beginning the US occupation forces not

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<sup>59</sup> Headquarters USFK, Regulation 190-2, “Military Police: Off Limits Areas and Establishments,” May 7, 2007; <http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/Uploads/330/USFK%20Reg%20190-2%20Off-Limits%20Areas%20and%20Establishments.pdf>

only tolerated and organized prostitution but also regulated it in ways that would satisfy their troops (Tanaka 2002, 151). Thus, we can see the strikingly similar measures in the policies of the U.S. military overseas on sex trade in camptowns, which is influenced by the well known British Contagious Disease Acts in 1860s (Walkowitz 1980). It is characterized as “imperative to register prostitutes, subject them to medical exams, and treat their disease if found sick” (Briggs 2003a, 41, Dery 1991, Exner 1917).

While the U.S. (military) authorities recognize prostitution as a military necessity, what they do is to take the steps necessary to prevent the spread of venereal diseases which would undermine the fighting effectiveness of the American forces (Dery 1991, 486). In the Philippines, the American military established a “tolerance” zone or segregated district, for prostitution in 1901, along with issuance of medical certificates, ostensibly as venereal disease control measures (Briggs 2003a, 51). In Japan, soon after the first contingents landed between late August and early September 1945, U.S. Army officers inspected red-light districts and set up prophylactic stations. US soldiers utilize not only RAA’s (the Recreation Amusement Association; the largest private enterprise for the purpose of rendering sexual and other recreational services to the occupation troops) facilities but also brothels in traditional red-light districts in Japan (Tanaka 2002).

Through regulationist position, the policy of the U.S. military authorities overseas can be summarized as “biomedical” which is always premised on the social ideology that women in the sex trade represent a public health threat as carriers of venereal disease infection. It should not be neglected that there are concrete contexts in each nation. Also I do not imply ahistoricism; yet through comparative perspective, I found that the policies of the military authorities centered on “biomedicalization” were strikingly similar. Policies with the local government’s cooperation and local communities include registration, statistics-keeping, gynecological examination, contact tracing/identification, and mandatory treatment of infected persons (Briggs 2003a, 41-2, Exner 1917, Garon 1993, Golder and Allen 1979, N. Lee 2006, McNinch 1954, Meade 1950, Ming 1983, K. Moon 1997, Sun 2004, Tanaka 2002, Willoughby 1998), as well as setting up prophylactic stations, patrol of the camptowns, and the use of off limits posting. The policies within the military include provisions of venereal prophylactic units to the servicemen, sexual morality education, and punishments such as demotions in rank, transferred away from their unit to a new and unfamiliar unit within the military if found infected (McNinch 1954, Waltner 2000, Woods 2001).

As Moon (1997) reminds us, it is critical to question why two governments initiate and negotiate a policy at a specific moment because any policies and negotiations

cannot be ahistorical and comes from power dynamics depending on various circumstances. More recently, the U.S. authorities officially adopted a “zero tolerance policy” prohibiting the solicitation of prostitution by the U.S. military forces since September 2003 and initiated combating trafficking in persons. In spite of discourses and the practice of crackdowns (throughout history) as well as the official stance of suppression, the actual contradictory existence of militarized prostitution has been explained for the essential nature of gendered militarism, logic of the military efficiency, and the health and welfare of military personnel.<sup>60</sup> However, the essential basis should be reminded: From the perspective of the local government, “it (prostitution) is a form of labor, and hence a strategy of economic accumulation and a site of repressive state intervention, and a question and symbol of sexual transgression, always fraught with danger, immorality, and contagion (Briggs 2003a, 43). That is why the contradictory realities -official prohibition/suppression and actual existence- exist through “regulationism” mostly centered on the “medicalization” of women in the sex trade whatever the linguistic elaboration is. Furthermore, it is also to remind that the U.S. military authorities who have varying position in host local

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<sup>60</sup> “In accordance with a zero tolerance policy, U.S. military officials suggested several aggressive programs to combat the sex trade and human trafficking such as an increase in both uniformed and non-uniformed patrol in known sex trade enclaves, putting suspect establishments and entire neighborhoods off-limits, creation of a human trafficking hotline for service means to report suspected cases, and addition of a anti-prostitution charge included a one -year confinement and a dishonorable discharge” (N. Lee 2006, 201-3).

societies always have consistent policies of regulationism depending on the cooperation and local circumstances throughout history.

### **3. Conclusion**

In the case of foreign camptowns in Korea, they have not been subject to analysis because of the symbolic nature of mixing and contaminating of national sovereignty in a local society. In the meantime, the local government re-emerges as a primary oppressor with comparative negligence of the role of the U.S military authorities in an international context. The tendencies are often reinforced by historical descriptions and sweeping depictions of local nations. I suggest that the military camptowns have their own developmental process with history and two relevant governments' relative policies: additionally understanding the control of sex trade in camptowns in the context of social managements involved in the politics of class and two governments' contradictory and a regulationist position on sex trade in camptowns. Such reconsideration of internal dynamics can provide us with more "balanced" perceptions of foreign camptowns in Korea.

### **Chapter 3: The Discursive Terrains of Western Whores and Mixed Blood People**

#### **1. Focus of the Analysis**

The essence of the contested nature surrounding the sex trade around U.S. military bases in Asian societies has been characterized as “sexual liaisons” with “foreign nationals (soldiers)” in both the academic and public sphere. The “national anxiety” around the “unnaturalness” of sexual liaisons is exemplified in derogatory terms such as western whores or western girls to describe Korean women engaged in sexual acts with U.S. servicemen. As many feminists and postcolonial writers like Ann Stoler (1997, 2002) and Partha Chatterjee (1989) have pointed out, the question of the women’s sexual liaisons with foreign nationals is contingent upon the concept of the nation or the reproduction of the nation in terms of social/cultural constructions of national identity. Thus, focusing on groups who cross and threaten the national divide between the U.S. and Korea compels us to question “how gender and class prescriptions shape nationness, the reproduction of nation and the cultural construction of race” (Stoler 1995, 129). By considering these politically contested social groups, I explore the gender-, class-, and race- based forces surrounding women in the sex trade and demonstrate the naturalized nature of a nation-state. To

this end, I revisit popular discourses, nationalist and visible feminist rhetoric surrounding the women.

To clarify, nationalism is not simply an ideological construct but is also shaped by social and economic processes. Two issues in particular require a thorough examination in the Korean context: the relationship of nationalism to a democratization process (institutional transformation of the rule of law or the exercise of electoral rights and pervasive penetration of democratic values such as rights and equality into the public) since the late 1980s and the constitution of anti-colonialism in relation to the U.S. It is the intertwined relationship of Korean anti-Americanism, nationalism and a movement of democratization that makes its interpretation and nature of anti-colonial nationalism more complex and debatable. Despite the historical, factual correlation between anti-colonial nationalism and the movement of democratization in Korea since the 1980s, in terms of pursuing democratic values and actors in the movements (Herr 2003), there are hardly any studies on their correlation. The overwhelming analytic poverty has primarily been due to the habitual thinking of “nationalism in non-western societies as anti-democratic, traditional, and reactive” (Plamenatz 1976) in both Korean and international context. Furthermore, while the studies on the democratization process have been developed mainly in relation to economic development and its institutional changes, the studies on nationalism have

been dealt with a question of “interpretation” of whether reactive or not rather than investigating how it is constitutive within colonialism (Chatterjee 1989, Yeğenoğlu 1998).<sup>61</sup> In spite of the relative analytical poverty, this is another critical factor that explains “moral justification” and the subsequent public support of anti-Americanism in Korea along with “reasoned reflection” on the practical oppression caused by the two nation’s unequal relationship.

However, my primary concern is with “the discursive dynamics” of the operation of nationalism/nation-state surrounding women in the sex trade. The limited focus on such articulation at a discursive level is most critically attributed to the fundamentals of logic and operation in regards to forces of gender, class and race. These fundamentals have not been changed nor has the naturalization process easily been contested, despite a wide range of feminist challenges to the gendered nature of nationalism.<sup>62</sup> To better comprehend the political nature of sexual liaisons between

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<sup>61</sup> For the interrelated nature of national liberation and a movement of democratization in a comparative context, see Younis, Mona, *Liberation and Democratization the South African and Palestinian National Movements*, 2000. With the same critique on conventional studies on a democratization process, Younis examines the connection between two movements in both Palestine and South Africa by putting the class (formation) as an explanatory variable. In the Korean context, see Han 2001 for a useful preliminary research on this point. For the constitutive nature of nationalism in the context of colonialism, see Yeğenoğlu 1998 and Stoler2002.

<sup>62</sup> How the nationalist discourses are essentially instituted in the patriarchal nationalism has been well documented in feminist scholarship since the mid 1990s (Chatterjee 1989, Enloe 1990, Kaplan, et al. 1999, Kim and Choi 1998, Koikari 1999, Korac 1993, 1996, McClintock 1997, Probyn 1999, Stoler 1997, 2002, Takeuchi 2001, Yuval-Davis 1996, Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). In the Korean context, the public and nationalist appropriation of Kumi Yun murder in 1992 and “heterosexual romantic” discourse of reunification movement in 1980s-early 1990s are explored by Kim, Hyeonsook (1998) and Jager, S. M. (1996), respectively.



local women and foreign nationals, a critical starting point is to keep in mind: “If the existence of certain human beings causes problems for certain concepts or systems of categorization, then it is the concepts or systems of categorization and not the human existants which need to be criticized and changed” (Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race*, 1993 quoted in Maclear 1994-5, 26). Through the examination of discourses around the women, I explore the complicated nature of Korean nationalism in terms of colonialism and the shared commonality between nationalist and feminist views on women. I further suggest the possibility of reasoned reflection on anti-colonial nationalism without reducing to patriarchal and classist representations of sex trade.

## **2. Discourses**

### **2-1. General Background of Korean Nationalism**

When it comes to public recognition, views on women in the sex trade and their offspring surrounding U.S. military bases is a complicated and exclusive one. This is because their existence is intertwined with international military relations between the U.S. and Korea as well as the division of the Korea Peninsula which is considered “high politics.” The meaning and degree of national security varies from nation to nation. In the case of Korea, because it has been in the state of militarized peace since the Korean War, the tenor of national security is extremely militarized and both

defensive and offensive in relation to North Korea. Thus, the majority of Koreans tend to think that due to the potential threat of North Korea, the presence of U.S. troops in Korea is inevitable for national security and women engaged in relations with U.S. soldiers is a necessary evil. Due to the overwhelming political, economic, and military presence of the U.S. in Korea (as an alliance and anti-communist social environments throughout history), it was in the 1980s that anti-Americanism movements and discourse could emerge in public and political spheres.

In the late 1980s, progressive nationalist discourse or anti-Americanism as a “political and discursive” force gained social respectability and penetrated more pervasively into the public. The new nationalism was developed and initiated by student activists and anti-government intellectuals. It is agreed in both public domain and academia that the most important moment of the emergence of anti-Americanism was the Gwangju uprising (reevaluated and renamed Gwangju democratization movement) in 1980. Hundreds of protesters against the Chun Doohwan military regime were killed by the Korean army in Gwangju-si, Jeollanam-do on 1980 May (Katsiaficas 2006). Protesters against the military government came to reconsider the American role in the massacre. The U.S. approval of the deployment of troops in the area helped the suppression because “the U.S. commander station in Korea held the military operational command power over the majority of the Korean armed forces

through the Combined Forces Command structure” (Y. Kim 2006, 133, Em 1993). In the process, the U.S. came to emerge as the main enemy instead of North Korea. The specific process of the progressive nationalist movement included reinterpretation of Korean history through activists’ and intellectuals’ acceptance/support of *juche* (self-reliance) idea of North Korea, national reunification struggles and anti-Americanism movements. Because *juche* idea “considered the U.S. decision to divide, occupy, and establish a military regime in Southern Korea as a direct expression of American imperialist ambitions in the Korean peninsula,” it challenged and subverted decades of Cold War rhetoric that portrayed North Korea as the enemy of the South (Jager 1996, 14). On the basis of radical change in recognition of North Korea and the U.S., the reunification struggles included “recognizing North Korea appropriately” and anti-American movements focused on the withdrawal of U.S. bases and the reform of the unequal Korea-U.S. relations on the SOFA.<sup>63</sup>

As such the political effectiveness of anti-colonial nationalism has been based on the desire for a reunification of Korea and the popular recognition of neo-colonial aspects of American dominance in Korea in conjunction with a movement of democratization since the late 1980s. That is, the goals of the nationalist movement of

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<sup>63</sup> Due to the revival of cultural Korean traditions and hostility toward westernization (the U.S.) in the banner of national independence and reunification, nationalism of this period is often called “cultural nationalism” compared to “economic nationalism” of the Park regime in the 1970s which characterized as the state’s hegemonic, economic/militant nationalism (S. Moon 1998). However as the simultaneous procession with democratization has shown, nationalism of the period is not only applied to cultural but to institutional planes as well.

the 1980s are not simply liberation from national dominance of the U.S. but also inner democracy within a local society (Herr 2003). I am rather familiar with the anti-Americanism movement in the early-mid 1990s because I was one of the student activists involved with the nationalist movement during my undergraduate career from 1991-95. I willingly accepted those claims as my own since I believed, like many other students, that the most fundamental contradiction which determined other social problems in Korea was a national contradiction in relation to the U.S. (the division of the Korea Peninsula since 1950 and the resultant political, economic and military dependence of Korea on the U.S.) rather than to the internal class contradiction that other Marxist activists argued.<sup>64</sup> As stated earlier, it was due to the “simultaneous progression” of anti-Americanism and democratization movements that anti-Americanism has always been understood as a “progressive” symbol, discourse and practice to resist U.S. neo-colonialism and could gain moral justification from the public. In the process, nationalist ideology and activism are often considered as pro-North Korea leftist traits, which results in political persecution under the Nationalist Security Law of Korea.

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<sup>64</sup> The debate was initiated between National Liberation groups (priority given to national liberation from U.S. dominance and reunification) and People Democracy groups (priority given to class liberation on the basis of Marxism). Both Marxist groups and nationalist groups have shared a common internal aim to democracy. And yet the stark difference in the strategy, dissident activists and priorities has caused continued internal tension in the process of democratic transition and afterwards political terrain.

The activism for the women in the sex trade was simultaneously formed by female college students in the early 1990s (H. Jeong 1999). But during the period of my participation in the movement, the issue of women in the camptowns was never subject to discussion even when we studied the negative effects of the presence of U.S. troops on Korea.

The political and practical effects of the overarching category of the nation have been sustained and often resurfaced as nationalist narratives and accounts by practical violence caused by U.S. military troops, such as crimes against Korean peoples committed by servicemen and various problems which destroy the local communities stationed with troops.<sup>65</sup> Thus, issues to consider are how we develop the reasonable

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<sup>65</sup> During the July 2006 fieldwork, I had the chance to visit Daechu-ri in Pyeongtaek-si, Gyeonggi-do where there was a protest against the relocation of the U.S. military bases. The demonstrations were initiated by pacifists, progressive nationalists, and elderly villagers who would be displaced. In contrast to nationalist movements in the 1980s-90s, when pacifism did not appear as a discourse and social force, the emergence of pacifist movement was a visible new change. The diversities of organizations and solidarities of Green United, women's organizations working for anti-prostitution and small local organization for viable communities were other appreciable changes. However, mainstream thinking and logic on this matter was within typical (masculine) anti-colonial nationalism. There were some poems on the village walls I was struck by:

Who's crumpling my home?/ Who's stepping on my mother's womb?/This is our land/This is our home/This is our mother's womb.../ Daechu-ri is my mother's womb/No one could crumple it with the military shoes/No one could trample by the tank/No one could gouge out with a gun and a sword. (Gyeongsik Seon, March 25, 2006)

To the guns to the guns, cannons, and the missile/How arrogant you (U.S.) have become since division (of North and South Korea)? The prostitutes have wasted their time/Don't ever let another clear-eyed Joseon (ancient dynasty of Korea) boy enter you again/Don't touch our skies, our mountains and our rivers/Cross the Ahpnok River, cross the Pacific Ocean, and Go away! Go away!/The girls are crying, holding their ears to their windows. (Dohyeon An, April 8, 2006)

justification to the oppression caused by the U.S. and its military forces and how the political operation of (naturalized) nationness is to be analyzed at a theoretical level.

## **2-2. “Commonalties” between Nationalist Narratives and (Visible) Feminist Rhetoric<sup>66</sup>**

Mainstream discourses on the women in the camptowns can be classified in three perspectives:<sup>67</sup> nationalist, feminist and “politics of possibilities.”<sup>68</sup> Since nationalist narratives and visible feminist rhetoric are strikingly conspicuous, the categorization of the former two does not carry the risk of overgeneralization regardless of the variety.

The first narrative is the most noticeable in reviewing the literature over three decades: Almost all literature on camptowns is tinged with “nationalist narratives” by

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In both poems, pacifism and nationalism are intertwined. Furthermore the exclusive oneness in relation to the outsider (U.S troops) and the internal collectivity of nation/nationalism, the most typical feature of nationalism, is not difficult to recognize. All Koreans are assumed to constitute one homogeneous self representing “our versus my.” Invocation of this national self affirms unified identity, based on an unchangeable “essence” that is transmitted through blood and homogeneous, traditional culture in the recuperation of “Joseon” not modern Korea. The idea of patriarchal, moral gender ideology is presented through the division between promiscuous prostitutes who engage in sexual acts with foreigners and respectable women as well as the naturalization of a mother’s biological reproduction through “my mother’s womb.”

<sup>66</sup> This section is partly based on my other article (M. Kim 2007; written in Korean). The quotation from the article is omitted. And the titles of some main novelists’ other works examined are omitted for convenience of the writing.

<sup>67</sup> English translated literature on camptowns include: Cheon, Sungse, “Screaming of a Yellow Dog,” 1984(1974), Cho, Haeil, *America*, 1990(1972), Kang, Seokgyeong. “Days and Dreams,” 1989(1985), and Pak, Wanseo, “Granny Flowers in those Heartless Days,” 1997(1977).

<sup>68</sup> The full explanation of the usage of term will be done in the following section 3.

mostly elite male intellectuals. Interestingly enough, almost all male writers both working and middle class writers in spite of different perception of the U.S., have revealed similar views on the women in the sex trade as poor, shameful, and materialistic or subjects of compassion. The underlying commonality in the nationalist narratives include: the protagonist as a male narrator; the most urgent priority of social tension is given to national oppression and, thus, a struggle for national identity and pride stands out. The U.S. government and the U.S. troops are depicted as absolute evils and the theme of sexual violence, such as U.S. GIs raping Korean women, are often employed to disclose and justify the colonial nature of the United States. Conceptually “nation” or “politics” is only represented or interpellated by a male subject. The usual depiction of (normal) Korean women are often narrated as “our sister and mother” appealing to compassion. On the other hand, they are blaming the women’s materialism and loose morality by calling them “second Yankee.” Either they are not sensitive to questions of class and gender differences within Korea or the issues are not taken seriously.

Jeonghyeon Nam’s “Dirty Land (Bunji)” (1995[1965]), among others, whose title symbolizes the fettered Korea in relation to U.S., is perceived as the first anti-Americanism novel and gained public attraction by reasons of his indictment against Anti-Communism Law (currently the National Security Law). It takes a satirical and

symbolic storyline and presents a typical nationalist perspective. The novel is a male protagonist's recollection in the form of a letter to his deceased mother. The first part reads that he would soon be attacked by an atomic bomb sent by the Pentagon for reasons regarding his rape of an American woman. The male protagonist begins the letter by identifying himself as the 10<sup>th</sup> generation of "Gildong Hong," a protagonist in an old novel in Joseon and a descendent of Dangun (the progenitor of the Korean peoples). His mother was raped in the welcoming celebration of the first station of U.S. troops in 1946 and died soon after. After being discharged from the military, he found out that his sister was engaged to a GI. Even though he felt rage against the situation, he came to make a living by selling American goods with the GI's help. Faced with the GI's distaste toward his sister's body and sexuality, he raped his sister's American partner's wife: "The image of the woman who runs away reminds me of you (mother); when you became crazy after you were raped by a U.S. soldier. As I felt relieved, I was suddenly overwhelmed with fear; fear that the woman I raped would turn crazy like you. But the anxiety quickly disappeared in a moment and soon I was enthralled with a deep emotion. They called America, 'heaven on earth,' and I felt like I had just subjugated it by raping that woman" (Ibid., 102). He tried to get some help from a Korean congressman but failed and just happened to run by the Pentagon and suffered the threat of the atomic bomb.



The self-identification of the 10<sup>th</sup> generation of Gildong Hong for Korean's quintessential legitimacy (employing Hong's revolutionary nature at the same time) was made through women's sexual violence, which symbolize Korea itself, and was also interpellated to function "as symbolic signifiers of national difference" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). However, another thing to be noted is that the author's criticisms were not only toward the neo anti-colonialist U.S., symbolizing the rape inflicted on his mother and his sister's engagement to the GI but also to the pro-U.S. Korean government. Two justifiable causes -critiques of Korean political power and U.S.- has provided the writer with practical, moral authority and consequently could never be questioned for the male protagonist's own sexual violence in order to call into question a national oppression and, at the deeper level, the implications of nationalist appropriation of women's sexuality.

Feminist literary works and criticisms have emerged since the mid 1990s by way of several female writers like Jeongmo Yun (1988, 1991, 1993) and Seokgyeong Kang (1985, 1993). They are conceived as well-known feminist writers in Korea (E. Kim 2003, S. Pak 2004). In most feminist works, the protagonist and narrator are mainly women in the sex trade. On the basis of the women's experiences and viewpoints, their novels not only focus on the violence inflicted by U.S. army troops and GIs but also disclose the patriarchal violence within a Korean society, and more

than anything else, the women's psychology, suffering, their daily lives and their ways of thinking on their practice. Thus the questions of women's agency and voices have been taken into account as key issues. Within this framework, the women are represented as victims who suffered from violence caused by U.S. militarism as well as Korean patriarchy and poverty or agents with a class/feminist consciousness.

Other than the predominance of nationalist narratives and accounts, another intriguing and significant fact, less discussed in existing studies, was the clear commonalties shared between feminist and nationalist writers, which stem from "the fusion of class and nation" and equally critically, the question of "reasoned reflection and analysis" (to borrow Ahmed 1992) on the unequal power relationship between the U.S. and Korea. I claim in my earlier essay (2007) that, in feminist literature, while the fusion of class and nation causes the class biased objectification by "differentiation" among women in the sex trade or from more marginalized social groups, the inevitable realization of national oppression ends up as the priority of the nation by inevitably reducing the category of gender to a secondary one. Thus, with another unexpected finding, contrary to existing popular interpretations, I suggest that the well-known novels Jeongmo Yun's *Bridle 1* (1988), *Bridle 2* (1993), "Light" (1991) and Seokgyeong Kang's "Nights and Cradle" (1993) and "Days and Dreams" (1985) share a nationalist perspective in terms of the priority of the category of nation

to gender (when they are seemingly in conflicts) and the class biased representation of the women in the sex trade. As some literary critics point out (H. Kim 1998, S. Pak 2004), Kang's novel presents the middle class point of view through the eyes of a female protagonist with intellectual abilities and high self-esteem, who objectifies other women's experiences in the sex trade with a sarcastic tone, "at least I am different from you" (Kang 1993). Moreover, the female narrator in "Days and Dreams" (1985) justifies the violence of a Korean man against a woman as nationalist pride as we can see the female narrator's murmuring, "What he did was hateful but the guy had his pride" (17) after she heard that the cause of murder was his rage and complained of his getting leftovers (women) from GIs. By disclosing local men's violence, Kang's novel clearly diverges from the conventional nationalist narratives where patriarchal violence of local men has never been challenged. Additionally, Kang was clearly aware of the issue of the nation and wanted to call into question the oppression of the U.S. troop's presence in Korea. The problem with the novel is that the voice of the female narrator results in a more "dramatic reaffirmation" of the priority of a nation and consequently the inevitable enforcement of silence on patriarchal violence against women.

As I have noted earlier, one critical reason for feminists' hesitations in total negation of patriarchal nationalism is due to a progressive nature of Korean

nationalism in terms of the simultaneous progression of the movement of democracy and realization of the national oppression in relation to the presence of the U.S troops. For instance, novelist Jeonghyeon Nam of “Dirty Land” (1965) was sentenced to a seven year reprobation in 1967 on the charge of being sympathetic to North Korea by urging anti-American sentiments and class consciousness. The novel appeared in an official newspaper of North Korea a few months after its publication and it served as a critical reason for his indictment.<sup>69</sup> His indictment gained public interest because it was considered an outright governmental persecution of the freedom of publication and thoughts. In spite of the typically patriarchal depiction of women with nationalist narratives such as fixation of sexuality and mobilization of the women in the sex trade and women’s sexual violence for national imagination, the novel gained political and moral justification through political persecution in the Korean context.

Both such a practical discrepancy in a local context as shown in novelist Nam’s case and “reasoned analysis on oppressions” caused by the two states’ unequal power relationship explain the complexity of anti-colonial Korean nationalism. The national inequality in terms of the U.S. troops’ presence varies from unequal SOFA enacted in 1965, to the question of (compulsory) dislocation for installation of the troops, to environmental destruction in host communities and health problems of local people,

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<sup>69</sup> Gukhakjaryowon, *Jeonghyeon Nam’s Collected Writings* 3, 2002.

as well as various crimes committed by military personnel.<sup>70</sup> One of the most emergent themes by interviewees and activists, among others, is that the U.S. military authorities retain jurisdiction in criminal cases in principle.<sup>71</sup> More symbolically, even though U.S. military authorities in many other countries like Greece, Turkey, and Spain pay rent or permission costs for access to land they do not pay any fees in Korea, Puerto Rico, and Philippines (McCaffrey 2002, 6, 185).<sup>72</sup>

If we discern reasoned reflections from patriarchal gendered nationalism, the antagonist, divisional relationship between nationalist/ism and feminist/ism can be solved.<sup>73</sup> My attempt for this is differentiated from an “eclectic position” between

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<sup>70</sup> MSP 1999, 2005, 2001; <http://www.usacrime.or.kr/>

<sup>71</sup> Specific forms and terms of U.S. overseas base agreements and access agreements are varying between the U.S. and host governments (See Calder 2007 and Cooley 2005). Also see Jung and Hwang 2002 for legal debate and inequality of the Korea SOFA.

For a legal aspect an interviewee states it in this way: “For example, GI murdered a western girl, even though women protested, it’s useless. American people hide the murderer. It was probably in 1980s something, an African American and Portuguese soldiers killed a taxi driver at Dongducheon. After killing the taxi driver, they slit the throat and ran away. The taxi company found out and drivers started to protest with demonstrations, and they wouldn’t let the soldiers ride in taxis. So what they did was... whenever someone killed or abused a Korean woman, for example, an African American did it?... They would bring anyone closely related to the murderer and they would let them wear clothes that fit close and ask. Even if they find something, they would just send them back to America. SOFA, the law... Only the poor do suffer. It’s just like that.” (Interview, June 2007)

<sup>72</sup> Some pacifist activists call into question the capitalistic solution for military installations. I put this as evidence to confirm the strategic and political nature of the international relations.

<sup>73</sup> In addition to the short phrase “reasoned reflection and analysis” I am indebted at this point to Leila Ahmed. She uses it in her essay “Discourse of the Veil” (1992) in pinpointing the complicity of feminism with imperialist interests, some nationalists’ internalization and replication of the colonialist perception, and some writers’ claim for unveiling not as antifeminists but as cogent analysis of social situation in the discourse of veiling/unveiling in Egypt (160-3). This short phrase helps me fundamentally transform my original stance on the relationship between feminism and nationalism in my previous article (2005b). In it, I raised a question considering the essentially patriarchal nature of nationalism, “Does it mean that a feminist cannot or should not be a nationalist?” My claim that a feminist does not need to be a nationalist remain unchanged but the main reasons have changed. Indeed I did not resort to a national identity based on ethnic race but to the possibility, a way of negotiating our identities without denying any particular sense of belongingness and to thinking through ethnicity by

nationalism and feminism on the basis of separate identities of each other or “reactive form” of third world nationalist feminism (Herr 2003), which presumes that they could be in a collaborative relationship with some common goals. For example, Kyung-ai Kim (1991) in her essay, “Nationalism: And advocate of, or a Barrier to, Feminism in South Korea,” examines the historical relationship between nationalism and feminism. As Kim’s title reveals, she argues that the struggle for women’s emancipation was an essential and integral part of the national resistance movement against imperialism in Korea. Thus, she argues that while nationalism and feminism supported each other (at least in nationalism against Japanese colonialism), since 1980s, their relationship came to be oppositional: Nationalists criticized feminism for being western and advocated, as well as argued for Korean traditional culture. More recently, with a similar inquiry on the relationship between nationalism and feminism, Ranjoo Herr (2003) suggests more elaborate understandings of the relationship between the two. She makes a good point that the minjung (common people as opposed to elite and leaders and who are symbolized as the oppressed) nationalist<sup>74</sup>

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sharing, solidarity and the mutual understanding of inclusion. However elaborate it is and is well-intended, I came to realize that such an approach inevitably reverts to the essentialized concept of identity which includes exclusion in principle. That is, the relationship between feminism and nationalism is not a matter of “identity,” or belonging but a (possibly disidentified) analysis which is not easy to differentiate in many cases. And yet, as I have suggested throughout this chapter, the distinction and development are often confused and subtle.

<sup>74</sup> Herr defines a nationalist movement in 1980s-90s “minjung (masses or people)” nationalism: It is in opposition to the state-sponsored nationalism of the military dictatorship; this movement was initiated by intellectuals and college students, but gradually spread to the minjung which consists of proletariat and petite bourgeois to use Marxist vocabularies (146).

movement's ultimate goal is to promote equality and democracy. This is also considered nationalist because the movement's proponents believe that such an ideal can be achieved only by overcoming the dominance of the U.S. (Herr 2003, 146). She thus concludes that in spite of patriarchal, masculine nationalism, third world feminism should not hastily reject nationalism. By re-conceptualizing nationalism in the third world "polycentric nationalism" (borrowing on Anthony Smith's distinction between ethnocentric nationalism and polycentric nationalism) whose proper goal is the attainment and maintenance of national self-determination, she claims that this type of nationalism should guarantee inner equality within a local society. This logic and the ensuing linguistic concoction, such as feminist nationalism in Korea (H. Kim 2009), keep reproducing. Despite well-intended and partially valid descriptions, their eclectic and reactive approaches have a critical theoretical shortcoming. The political operation of nationalism remains intact rather than contested and explored. To put it differently, given the fact that women's question is always manipulated within nationalists' frameworks and anti-Americanism is gendered in the discourse of colonialism, their argument necessarily fails to explain the gendered nature of the nation and the commonalities between patriarchal nationalist narratives and class-

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She then argues that the movement's goal has been precisely to combine democracy and nationalism. The superficial description is valid. However, as my personal experience has shown, the strategy and actors of movements were different. While Marxist groups are called a minjung democracy group, the group I belong to was called a nationalist democracy group. The linguistic concoction of minjung nationalism lacks such a context.

biased feminist rhetoric. What we should take into account is the nature of inevitably intersectional, political oppression of various factors, and the relationship between nation and gender rather than a simple reactive connection of naturalized nationalism and feminism. Further we must focus on the inner dynamics of democratization and nationalism in the Korean context. The practical reality and theoretical naturalness of nation/nationalism is much more complicated than merely arguing that third world feminism should not be given away to nationalism.

For the purpose of this research, a significant criterion is to consider how nationalists and feminists “develop” “reasoned reflection on oppressions caused by U.S. military presence” in terms of the representation and understanding of women in the sex trade who are most often employed in their storylines and even in a practical nationalist movement. I introduce Jeongmo Yun, whose works present both feminist and nationalist points of view. Her works *Bridle 1, 2* and a short novel, “Light,” have clearly revealed the “complicated interplay” between nation, gender and the democratization process. Yun has taken up many issues such as Korean comfort women during Japanese colonialist rule and working class people considered as minjung writer in Korea, not a middle class feminist. Yun also went through similar political persecution due to her being an anti-Americanism writer by the government which she narrated in the epilogue of *Bridle 2*.



Both *Bridle 1* and 2 present the tension between feminism and nationalism through the issues of class, prostitution and democratization in the 1980s - early 1990s. The story is developed by four characters, the main female protagonist Jeongin, her husband, Sangu, younger sister Haein and Sangu's college friend, writer Sieon. Jeongin is a former sex worker who is "rescued" and "enlightened" by Sangu, a history teacher with a nationalist consciousness and a compassionate. After their marriage, Sangu becomes imprisoned for teaching his left-wing ideologies in night school. Influenced by her husband, she tried to "enlighten" her sister, Haein, who used to work in camptowns and is married to a U.S. soldier, uncritical, unrecognizable of the nature of U.S. imperialism. In *Bridle 2*, her husband's female friend, Sieon came to be a protagonist. She is an anti-government activist and writer. Through the female novelist who actively participated in a reunification movement in 1980s, Yun more actively takes up the issue of the relationship between nation and gender, and the issue of sex trade. In the beginning of the second sequel (1993), she derides the feminist movement in Korea as high-middle classed, and inappropriate in the third world where the question of national oppression should be given priority.<sup>75</sup> Sieon publishes a report on Jeongin's life story which meets Haein's challenge to her depiction of a pitiful subject saying "I am a proud wife of American citizen, not poor Korean woman

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<sup>75</sup> She later expressed a slight change that the feminist movements could be of use to the ultimate achievement of democracy.

marrying a foreigner.” When they happened to meet, Haein told Sieon that “I don’t like people like you, pretending to know everything. It is because I hate Jeongin so much that she imitates people like you” (1993, 245). Sieon says that “her challenge is not toward her sister, but intellectuals like me? Because she couldn’t bear Jeongin whom she has thought nothing gains a social recognition, she further wanted to challenge a person like me” (245). While Jeongin is finally involved in a social movement (working as a volunteer in MSP) after her husband’s imprisonment and subsequent involvement in democratization activism, her sister involved with a U.S. serviceman remains depicted as pro-U.S. and lacking in nationalist consciousness.

As I noted, Yun derides the middle class feminist movement and gives priority to national oppression. She defines Korea as a third world country and criticizes prostitution in terms of human rights violation. But her arguments, reasoned analysis of national oppression and justification of democracy can be only achieved on the grounds of a pro-U.S. ex-sex worker who envies the middle class intellectuals. Yun’s another short story “Light” (1991) dramatically manifests the tension between gender and nation through two incidents. One incident is the sexual harassment of the female narrator’s young daughter by a Korean soldier who later justifies his actions by the fact that he was enraged by the presence of the U.S. army. The other incident is the narrator’s male cousin’s struggle to protect the land that the U.S. army wanted to use

for military training purposes. Her younger cousin, who only seemed to be immature to the female protagonist, suddenly becomes a “national fighter” and worthy of her acknowledgement. She says “I did not know there was that side of him before.” By getting compensation for the land, the victory of national struggle has been eventually achieved. In the meantime, even though the narrator gets mad at her cousin’s response to the crude actions of the Korean soldier, “even he did it out of vexation. (Even though you try to jail military officials related,) it seems to disgrace our own face... It (annual joint military exercise called Team Spirit Training) is for Yankees... You should forgive him. He and we are both puppets for Yankees and pitiful peoples” (617), and her husband’s response, “the important thing, at his point, is for our baby to forget the nightmare... There could not be better idea than that” (617), she soon came to the realization that may be they were actually right, and that there was nothing she could do to make things better. A violent experience of an individual like sexual harassment of a Korean child by a Korean soldier can not be an issue which overwhelms the question of the nation; here the question is of land.

Such a deployment of logic is not quite different from a nationalist account. The divisional perception of the categories of nation and gender, and subsequent priority to nation are more elaborated by a Korean literary critic, Hunha Pak. He is the first literary critic who analyzes militarized prostitution literature in terms of nation and

gender in his essay, “The Establishment of Manhoodness and the Genealogy of Gijichon Novel” (1996). He examines how Korean masculinity is presented in novels on camptowns with a chronological approach. His inquiry stems from the Korean men’s masculinity but not from women’s femininity in spite of the main subject being women in the sex trade. He explains that he does it on purpose: “Since the identity of the third world can be sustained only by the imperialist determination (meaning relationship) of the first world, I wanted to maintain the possible modern paradigm. If I gave up this position (if I focus on femininity or women’s standpoint), (an understanding of) prostitution in camptowns should have been filled with sentimental pity and rage” (152). For Pak, because Korea is identified with the third world and thus if we have not solved the national conflict which is a pivotal axis of Korean modern society, questions surrounding post-modern discourse of sexuality or gender discourse can not be raised (152). Not surprisingly, in his nationalist framework, the nation identifies with men and the Korean national identity is established through the Korean man’s masculinity in relation to outsiders (in this case the U.S.). Gender becomes a variable that is separate and trivial. It is not difficult to confirm that his inquiry itself originates from a patriarchal understanding of this issue.

And yet, as many feminists and postcolonial scholars have argued, the nation/nationalism are not gender-neutral concepts and ideologies, but are in fact

essentially gendered and bound to a biologically essentialist notion of racial purity (Maclear 1994-5, Stoler 1997). The specific practice or “inherently internal contradiction” of nationalism in relation to imperialist forces is well explored in Partha Chatterjee’s famous formulation in the case of India. According to Chatterjee (1989), anti-colonial nationalist discourses often resolve their temporal conflict between tradition and modernity by means of spatial mapping that are decisively gendered. Chatterjee sets out the double aims of third-world nationalist discourses in terms of the division between the material and spiritual levels. At a material level, the colonized nation, conceding the superiority of western science, technology, and economic and political systems, moves to appropriate these domains of modernity and progress. The spiritual domain enables this access to modernity by ensuring the cultural autonomy of the nation, and what is more, its cultural superiority to the west. That is, this division between the material and the spiritual, between tradition and modernity, is a gendered division whereby the material sphere is conceived as outer, public, and masculine, while the inner, domestic, spiritual sphere is feminized with women bearing the burden of preserving the distinct, non-western identity of national culture (1989, 237-39).

Thus, both interestingly and ironically, such a divisional idea of the relationship between gender and nation makes Pak forget his analysis of the establishment of

Korean men's masculinity being based on sexuality at the outset. He argues that if he focuses on femininity or women's standpoints, (an understanding of) prostitution in camptowns should be filled with sentimental pity and rage. On the contrary, almost all novels with a nationalist perspective have such tendencies as self-pity, pity, and rage - "an overflowing self-consciousness" - which not only originates from a nationalist consciousness but also class biased consciousness. While interpreting Nam's "Dirty Land," by addressing that sex is the only variable which makes the public consider GIs as an opponent and further make the public recognize the issue, Pak only reminds us of sensationalism of sexuality. What we should be asking is, why does the sex variable make GIs a public enemy? Why does it produce public recognition of GIs and the U.S.? The questions we need to consider are how, why, and in what contexts are the power relationships presented and why the particular relationships stand out in a specific moment. Interestingly, Hunha Pak (1996) goes further in addressing that several novels through the 1966-1970s reveal "an overflowing self-consciousness on the basis masochistic psychology." This means the shame, rage, disgrace, and feelings of helplessness felt by the male narrators in a series of male writers' literature including Nam's "Dirty Land" (1965). Pak specifies, "when one is not strong enough to handle trauma that comes from the outside world, the psyche forms a self-defense mechanism in an effort to sustain oneself. This defense mechanism serves as a buffer

between the outside trauma and the individual trying to cope, to try to alleviate whatever shock that is about to come his way. The work on militarized prostitutes (from 1966 to 1970) has clearly manifested this kind of mental state” (134). It is not difficult to find such a consciousness in nationalist literature by male elites. But I argue that besides masculine nationalist understanding entangled with patriarchal sexual ideology, the “overflowing self-consciousness” is also a “class-biased understanding” which objectifies women in the sex trade. This is found in feminist rhetoric too.<sup>76</sup> The psychology of shame, rage, and humiliation show the male narrator’s moral superiority where the male elites/narrators patronize women in the sex trade by “a desire and fantasy to master, control by making them visible” (to paraphrase Yeğenoğlu 1998, 12).

While nationalist narratives manifest such emotions as rage and shame, feminist rhetoric reveals its “class biased differentiation” as well as a resultant priority of national oppression and identity, as I have shown in the analysis of novels by Kang and Yun. For example, interestingly enough, in both their works, the issue of homosexuality is taken into account. While Kang defines it against a natural law, Yun addresses it in the context of poverty and human alienation caused by U.S.

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<sup>76</sup> George Mosse argues simultaneous emergence between nationalism, the middle class, and respectability in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century with the beginning of modern nationalism. He argues that respectability emerged in alliance with sexuality and helped to shape middle-class and abnormality, about virility and manly bearing. The control over sexuality evidenced in the triumph of the nuclear family was vital to respectability (Mosse 1985, 2-10; quoted in Alexander 1994, 13).

materialism. The essence of the debate is not whether homosexuality is against a natural law but the way they employ them in order to privilege their moral authority and social position by “differentiating” the more alienated social groups.

Nation/nationalism mobilizes women’s bodies on the basis of “both patriarchal sex ideology and class difference between the women themselves.” Chatterjee explores the context where the women are nationalized. The nationalist image of the woman was deliberately separated from the degenerate condition of woman in western societies; she was culturally superior to the excessively westernized women of wealthy families who had colonial connections. However, she was also not vulgar, coarse, devoid of superior moral sense or sexually promiscuous like the lower class women were. Her sexuality was erased by a successful new portrayal as a mother, symbolizing the motherland so that her new place in the outside would not constitute a significant challenge to the care and protection of the nation’s true self (Chatterjee 1989). As noted (see footnote 13), the Kumi Yun case of 1992 gained public interest because of the excessively brutal murder of a Korean woman by a US soldier. This public recognition was fueled by the wide circulation of the graphic visual images of her murder scene. What is often neglected is that public recognition was made possible because of her “classed” body. That is, this issue gained public interest



because she was a working class woman given the intrinsically linked relationship between privacy, class, and the female body.<sup>77</sup>

The simultaneous process of democratization, anti-colonialism, and continued invisibility of class-biased representations and discourses continue reproducing the objectification of the women in the sex trade and naturalization of nation/nationalism. Of course, such tendencies serve to reproduce the different experiences of the less privileged social groups as silent, distorted and sacrificed. As stated earlier, nationalism is not necessarily in opposition to feminism. Visible feminist rhetoric along with nationalist narratives shares certain commonalities in class-biased understandings of women in the sex trade.<sup>78</sup> Reasoned analysis on oppression inflicted by the unequal relationship between the U.S. and Korea should be reached without resorting to patriarchal nationalism or utilization of women's class based bodies and suffering.

### **2-3. "Political Naturalization" of Nationness**

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<sup>77</sup> The now classic formula of Yuva-Davis and Anthias (1989) capture the gendered functions in the discourse of nationalism and the practical operation of nationness: as biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities; as reproducers of the boundaries of a national group (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations); as active transmitters and producers of the national culture; as symbolic signifiers of national difference; as active participant of national struggles. The idea of a classed nature in each function is also to be included in such a context.

<sup>78</sup> For some comparative and useful contexts, see postcolonial feminists Ahmed 1992, Yeğenoğlu 1998, where they point out the complicity of feminism with imperialist interests in the discourse of veil. See Mani 1998 for the case of sati (widow burning).

In existing studies on gendered nations and nationalism, what has been comparatively neglected and needs to be reminded is why the nation is essentially gendered. For example, in Chatterjee's famous formula I also cited, he did not give enough answers as to "why" the division between the spiritual and material world itself is gendered. I argue that this is because the nation-state is (re)produced by or constituted by family (birth itself and conjugal relationship) and the biologically essentialist concept of race. On the basis of the naturalized social construction of nationness, it is thus too natural that existence of women in U.S. camptowns and their offspring, Amerasians, has been always a polemical issue in a national imagination. This is because they destabilize "imagined and naturalized" national identity through transgressing proper roles of the national body, familial state (or birth), and biologically essentialist definition of race.

We can see the ways in which the legitimacy of a mono-racial nation and nationalized women's body are intricately deployed by a famous Korean novelist, Jeongrae Cho, "Yellow Soil (Hwangto)" (1989[1974]). Cho has written many novels about Amerasians and the question of the presence of the U.S. troops in Korea. "Yellow Soil" shows his determined will to recuperate the status of a pure, mono racial nation. A female protagonist in "Yellow Soil" under Japanese colonial rule becomes a concubine to a Japanese policeman to save her father from going to jail,

and gives birth to a mixed blood child (Korean-Japanese). After liberation from Japan, she happens to marry a left-wing Korean man who leaves her to cross the North Korean border. After her husband disappears, she becomes a mistress to an American GI. In the end, she is left with three children; her eldest son who is Japanese-Korean, her daughter who is a pure blood, and her youngest son who is Amerasian. Her first child, Taeik, from the Japanese policeman does not get along with his younger brother, Dongik. When Dongik gets lost in Mt. Everest, Taeik shouts at his mother, “He (Dongik) can’t escape what is in him. He’s got that savage blood that maliciously killed all those Native Americans. That is why he is the way he is.” And though she understands Taeik’s rage towards his younger brother, she speaks to herself, “He cannot escape what’s in him? It is that savage blood that boils in your veins (which is from a heartless Japanese policeman) and that makes you so heartless. In her blurred vision, she saw Yamada (the Japanese Policeman).” In the last scene, the female protagonist confirms the legitimacy of a Korean’s blood by inheriting her daughter who is of pure blood, whose father is Korean, and who is portrayed as the most considerate among the children.

Not surprisingly, this novel has been often employed to question mono-racial nationalism and to present women’s complicated destinies according to a loss of national independence. However the implication of the novel is deeper than that; it

reveals the more fundamental structures of the modern states -the rules regulating marriage- are what enable the state to reproduce itself and what makes the power relations associated with nationality, ethnicity, race, and family roles possible. As Alexander (1994) and Stevens (1999) point out, the archetypal source of state legitimization is anchored in “the heterosexual family,” the form of family crucial in the state’s views to the foundation of the nation:

Not just (any) body can be a citizen any more, for some bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, these bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation. (Alexander 1994, 6)

Furthermore Stevens (1999) reminds us of the fact that marriage continues to reproduce the state itself or the “politicization of marriage”: First, marriage provides the legitimacy that renders some children citizens and other aliens; second, marriage is a form of kinship relation that defines the particularity of that state against others; third, marriage is the benchmark of full citizenship. The juridical privileging of certain kinship rules by marriage -in tax law, health and welfare policy, educational policy and immigration law- continues to render the married couple as the ultimate unit worthy of the fullest political rights (220). Through such a “political nature” of family which is always naturalized in relation to political society, conjugal relationship, or women’s gendered citizenship is pivotal and an essential part of the

operation of nation-state (Alexander 1994, Stevens 1999).<sup>79</sup> As Stevens (1999) puts it, “by rendering membership rules those of birth, a process characterized as ‘natural,’ the masculine citizen appropriates maternal power. The seamless overlap between law and family naturalizes the politically constituted family and simultaneously conceals the artifice of membership rules” (212). Eventually, the deep-rooted, naturalized social construction of a family, based on essentialist concept of blood, dramatically disrupts familiar gender hierarchies and “even primogeniture” (in the novel) which is definitely unfamiliar and unusual in any society.

It is due to the very “political” nature of mixed race people that the state attempts to maintain clear-cut distinctions. Thus we see strikingly similar observations in dealing with mixed race people in the various contexts. The inclusion or exclusion of mixed race people has been substantiated in several ways such as “invisibility” including legal abandonment, “international adoption,” “sterilization” and “separation from the outer societies” in various contexts.<sup>80</sup> For the Korean government,

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<sup>79</sup> “The very form of kinship rules (family and marriage form) created gender roles, even when these laws provide apparent equality to husbands and wives. The very form of a political society controlling reproduction establishes birth, and hence mothers, as objects of state intervention. This objection genders the state-as the force oppositional to the mother-as paternal. Because maternity and paternity are associated with women and men respectively, these latter, sexed subject positions develop in the matrix of hierarchical kinship conventions” (Stevens 1999).

<sup>80</sup> The Japanese majority has insisted on treating *konketsuji* (Japanese word for mixed blood child) as foreigners as well. The majority of the Japanese hope to end the mixed-blood irritation by sending them abroad. They targeted Americans and Brazilians to adopt the mixed children; they began a grand experiment, shipping a few dozen off to farm the jungles of Brazil. Adoption by Americans helped only a handful of individuals. However, the Brazil experiment was beset by economic difficulties and local resistance, and seemed unlikely to succeed (Spickard 1998). In Germany, during the French occupation of the Rhineland after

international adoption is the most convenient way to solve the problem of mixed race people. The presidential order of January 20, 1954 sanctioned the establishment of Child Placement Services for the purpose of providing intercounty adoption. By 1955, the Holt Adoption Agency was established as a private sectarian agency to provide international adoption services for available children (Sarri 1998, 92). Some interviewees testified that social workers visited them and suggested international adoption. In the case of Anjeong-ri, there was a rumor that North Korea would invade and then kill Amerasians first in the 1970s (Interviews). That was why some women decided on international adoption.

Many studies have pointed out that race is the very ideological social construction and political invention to reinforce white supremacy and racial purity in a patriarchal

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the First World War, for the children fathered by French Colonial troops (from Algeria, Morocco etc), who became known as the “Rhineland bastards,” there were some suggestions. The first suggestion was to create additional laws which would permit sterilization of mixed blood children. Another suggestion was to send the children to countries with black populations and raise them up with the help of missionaries-giving each child the sum of 10,000 German marks after they left the country. This was quickly abandoned as unrealistic and too expensive. Finally, the children would be sterilized illegally by medical doctors who were members or friends of the Party in a top-secret operation. The only remaining problem was how to get the mothers to consent to such operations. Yet, 90% of the mothers voluntarily understood the need for the operation in response to the offer that would otherwise be sent for a re-education in a concentration camp (Fehrenbach 2001, Pommerin 1982). In Vietnam, the mothers of Amerasians were the first targeted for the repopulation into economic zone programs initiated by the new Communist government in the 1960s. As a result, many mothers and families of Amerasians were taken from cities and relocated as farmers in rural areas (Olmsted 2004, 91). Ironically, those historical examples confirm that the problem of mixed race people is not the problem of blood but that of “social identity, or the politics of inclusion and exclusion.”

I draw on cases in Japan, German, and Vietnam to look at the differences and similarities in considering mixed race people. Yet, it should be emphasized that the situation and context in each nation is more complicated than I describe here. For example, while mixed blooded children in those nations are children of enemies, Amerasians in Korea are not thought to be such although there are some similarities such as social discriminations and alienated status.

society (Maclear 1994-5, Miles 1993, Omi and Winant 1994, Roberts 1995, Stevens 1999). Thus the primary characteristic of ethnic boundaries is attitudinal (Armstrong 1982, Fields 1982). Yet because the biological notion of race and national identity based on racial purity is intense and naturalized, we cannot even think that those concepts are political and historical ones. The question we need to consider is why and how the naturalized or imaginatively constituted concept of racial purity is mobilized and operated/substantiated in specific historical moments.<sup>81</sup>

### **3. Marginalized but Transcending Discourses**

Lastly I consider some “marginalized” but transcending discourses on the women and what I categorize as “politics of possibilities.”<sup>82</sup> As Barad and Gilmore originally intend, it denotes a realistic (re)composition of social phenomenon, “ways of

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<sup>81</sup> Briefly consider examples to show that “issues of race do not necessarily take precedence in deciding national membership”; in the German colonies of Southwest Africa, East Africa, and Samoa during the first decade of this century, a number of German men who married local women successfully petitioned German courts to have their interracial children recognized as German citizens and their rightful heirs. In these cases, the fact of German paternity was crucial. Prior to 1935 -when the Nazi state demoted non-Aryans to second-class status and prohibited marriages and sexual relations between Aryan Germans and Jew, Gypsies, Negroes, and their bastards- and again after 1945, the category “mischlinge” (German word for mixed blood people) remained significant as a social marker but “legally irrelevant” in determining German citizenship (Fehrenbach 2001, 166). Another example is the political nature of inclusion and exclusion, the difference of legal treatment of mixed race children between French and U.S. French, which is well known for its “exclusive” policies to Eurasian people and the limited and impractical one of U.S. (Brubaker 1992).

<sup>82</sup> This term is originally suggested by a geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore and co-author Barbara Harlow. In their unpublished article, they suggest replacing the politics of location to this term. Karen Barad (2001) mentions it in the concluding remarks of her essay, “Re(con)figuring Space, Time, and Matter” to back up her realist vision, pinpointing the limits of Euclidean geometric imaginary in some concepts of positionality, standpoint, contextuality, intersectionality, local knowledge, and global capital.

responsibly imagining and intervening in the re(con)figurations of power” (Barad 2001, 104). The works I include in this category are, in fact, various in contents (M. Kim 2007). They include not only autobiographies of women such as Oksun Pak (1965)<sup>83</sup> and Yeonja Kim (2005; activist and former sex worker in camptowns) but also some exceptional works such as Ilsun An’s *Bbaetbbeol* (1995), Ina Yun’s *Baby* (1996),<sup>84</sup> Sojin Kim’s (1995) and Wanseo Pak’s novels. Among others, I take and reinterpret the late male novelist Sojin Kim (1963-97) and another popular female writer Wanseo Pak (1931~). Both are considered to be realistic writers who are astute in the uniqueness of Korean language. They insightfully transcend historical predominance of resort to “nation” on one hand and “sexuality,” “exploitation” on the other hand, and the seemingly inevitable relationship between social position and knowledge formation (osmotic relationship between position and knowledge).

Sojin Kim used to work at a progressive newspaper company (*Hankyoreh Newspaper*) as a journalist and mainly wrote of working class people based on his own experiences. The main character of Kim’s “A Foulmouthed Lady from

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<sup>83</sup> Oksun Pak’s *Under Which Heaven Does my Star Lie?* (1965) is the first autobiography written by a sex worker involved in the camptown. She was born from a mother raped by an American GI. She and her mother’s story appeared in the newspaper (*Chosun Ilbo*, December 2, 1965). She wrote about her daily life, feelings about family and her work, feelings about being an Amerasian, love with a Korean man, and the exploitation of a brothel keeper with whom she worked.

<sup>84</sup> *Bbaetbbeol* is a nickname of Gosan-dong in Uijeongbu-si, symbolically means an area, once entered is impossible to escape. An’s novel is based on Yeonja Kim’s interviews and life histories, and provides quite realistic, graphic depiction of women’s daily lives. It includes the governmental systematic mobilization of sex trade and diversities of class within the sex trade which were not presented until then and even now. Ina Yun’s novel is explored in chapter 4.



Hamgyeong-do,” heungnam daek (Mrs. from Heungnam province in North Korea)

has a daughter named Okja who engages with GIs and an Amerasian grandson.

Heungnam daek is presented as a traditional but active elderly greengrocer. She

sometimes complains her daughter is engaging with a black GI, and expresses the

desire that her grandson should be given the chance to live in a country that does not

discriminate against Amerasians. However she neither blames her daughter for

engaging with GIs, nor does she distance herself from her daughter. Interestingly

enough, she scolds her son for his “hypocrisy” because he despises the GI her sister

brought with her but practically enjoys the economic interest from his sister. After

meeting a black GI who came with Okja and thinking that he is a reliable person (a

symbolic instance is shown that unlike other past GIs Okja brought on, he does not

exhume any disregard to poor condition of restroom), heungnam daek accepts him as

her son-in-law. Such a storyline and representation is entirely different from the

typical male nationalist narratives (and feminist works) where the protagonist gains

their (moral) authority by opposing the practice of sex work. Instead of establishing

Korean women/men’s authority by negating the daughter’s engagement with a black

GI or resorting to the nation, she does it by “accepting” and continues living her life.

Kim Sojin creates the class solidarity by presenting the GI from the working class.

Another critical point in this novel is that Kim pinpoints the “hypocrisy” of nationalist,

elitist position on the sex trade through Okja's brother Seongho. Quite interestingly, Seongho's animosity toward Okja and her boyfriend, unlike typical nationalist narratives and novels, is not "outright." He comments on Okja as if he has nothing to do with her and does not bother her sister's engagement to GIs when her mother grumbles about her black GI boyfriend. Heungnam daek furiously chides him for his practically parasitic life.

Meanwhile, Pak's "Granny Flowers in Those Heartless Day" was written in 1977 and translated into English twice in 1997 and 1998.<sup>85</sup> Some intriguing issues such as "the positive role of time," women's sexuality during wartime and "aging" are interplayed in two stories. The protagonists are two elderly women who sexually engage with a Korean soldier and GIs. An elderly woman is more inclined to de-virginize a Korean soldier because a wartime myth says that only virgin soldiers get shot and the other woman for her matriarchal authority/decision to volunteer in place of young women in the village from GIs. Pak puts in the ending that those stories are not fictional and was told by someone in person.

More specifically, in the first story, the soldier takes a long time to fully realize what the elderly woman's sexual act is on the grounds of genuine compassion. When the soldier, Kim, was about to leave, the elderly woman spoke, "Visit again." He

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<sup>85</sup> Another version of 1998 is titled "A Pasque Flower on that Bleak Day" in *The Rainy Spell and Other Korean Stories*, 1998.

thought to himself if she still longed for the pleasures of sex and was captured by the rapture and satisfaction on her face. He felt hoodwinked and felt disgusted. The experience made him loathe women. Days passed. Kim earned enough money and fell into a life of dissipation. Whenever he thought of that old woman, he was sure of his confidence in his masculinity. As more time passed, he married and settled down to the regular routine of a family man. His original notion of the woman had been changed that the pleasure she felt must have come from the notion that her sexuality could still give joy to a man. Countless days have passed again; Kim is nearing fifty. He realized the sincere compassion in the favor she bestowed upon him; the looks of satisfaction that had so disgusted him as a young man now strike him as a smile of genuine humanism (Ibid., 153-55). In the end of the first story, Pak adds that borrowing the voice of the male narrator, being old is not that bad and lonely of a thing as people believe it to be. In the second story, the sexual liaison does not happen. When the GIs realized the woman they brought for sexual purposes was a skinny little elderly woman, they burst into heartily merry laughter she found as pure as a child's, and they returned her to the village with some food. The novel ends with Pak's own narration that those stories were not fictional but based on true stories from her friend. The elderly women were not acquaintances. She puts the reason why she brought them up to create a story: "I don't mind whether women are subjected as sexual

beings, whether they are simple topics that men talk about insincerely asking if women have souls or not, or whether women are subjected as mothers whom babies first meet and learn from. Anyhow, I just want to say that women are women until they die and they can not be exempted from being women.” Unfortunately both English translations do not put Pak’s own narrations.

In spite of their popularity in Korea, their works on women in the sex trade have been little discussed. It seems that because they diverge from the pervasive nationalist narratives or familiar feminist rhetoric, it is hard to find appropriate frameworks to interpret their works. What is striking is that the two novels were written in 1997 and 1977 respectively. It defies the historical, discursive inevitability of an overarching trope of a nation or patriarchal nationalist narratives. That is, any approach/methods and interpretation of a society and phenomena are not necessarily historically already given, but it depends on who interprets and experiences what, and how they are developed. Indeed, it does not mean the direct, osmotic relationship between experience and knowledge because they transcend their socially fixed identification with class and gender. I am not arguing that they are more progressive or appropriate in explaining women in sex trade as simply different, positive representation of GIs and appeals for seemingly universal, humanistic compassion. In fact, several other writers attempt to present similar views. However a positive representation and

compassion does not fully explain the underlying deeper implications of their works.

Both writers have different starting points on the militarized prostitution from existing nationalist and feminist writers in the first place. They do not begin with the socially familiar questions on the sex trade, “why” they engage with GIs. Such starting points and subsequent unfamiliar description of GIs and the elderly women presume that the writers understand and recognize the circumstances where the agents cannot completely be responsible for structural detriments rather that they do not have any consciousness of the oppressive nature of U.S. troops (Pak, in the novel, describes GIs looking for young Korean women). They neither sacrifice the women in the sex trade resorting to the trope of a nation as nationalist intellectuals do, nor argue for reflexive resistance as visible feminist rhetoric by valorizing the women’s sacrifice and assertive forms of sexuality and agency.

In the meantime, the questions of the wartime rape and instrumentalism of women’s bodies in Pak’s novel can be raised. This is a typical feminist interpretation where any possibility of sexuality as power is foreclosed, and Pak’s original intent is misunderstood. The elderly women’s acts are even misread as an “intuitive revelation of motherhood” in a crisis (not surprisingly by a male literary critic). In response to the young women’s outright remarks to the GIs searching for women, “I would rather die than being sexually engaged with foreigners,” the elderly women bitterly derides

the young women's outright proclamation of keeping their chastity, which valorizes/is based on the patriarchal sex ideology in spite of their expressive resistance. The elderly woman is well aware that the young women's resistance is nothing more than the "internalization of patriarchal sexual morality." Thus, their sexual engagement with men presented in the two cases are not simply normative humanism, sacred motherhood, reactive resistance simply criticizing young' women's internalization of patriarchal moral sexuality. Rather it is a source of power (Lorde 1984; it is described as matriarchal authority in the novel) strong enough for GIs to "realize what they are doing to her" in the moment which results in their genuinely pure laughter in the second story. As the Korean soldier took his whole life to finally recognize the humanism in the elderly women's smile, Pak's insights into sexuality and human acts are quite unfamiliar and transcending. Thus she has often been underestimated which limits her insights into female sensibility among male literary critics, and has even been misunderstood by feminists (Chohan 1994).

Moreover, Pak was not unaware of the wartime rape and colonialist, unequal nature of the U.S. in Korean society. She put the fact that the GIs wandered around to seek young women in the second story, and she destabilizes the uniqueness of Americans by mentioning that soldiers from other countries would never be different. A short novel, Pak's "J-1 Visa" (1998), is also considered as an anti-American novel

by nationalists and critics. The male protagonist in the novel is a Korean language teacher as well as a novelist. He is invited to a seminar titled “Colonial Experience and Modernity: The Cases of Korea, Japan, and China” in an American university by a former student studying at the university. In the process of getting a visa, he faces some difficulties. The invitation for issuing a visa was mailed late. The hosting organization decided to delay the seminar. But because the invitation maintained the original date, his application for a visa was rejected after overdue periods. Clearly, this made him too exhausted and finally impossible to attend to the seminar. The host organization insisted they would contact the U.S. embassy to smooth the transaction, and he thought he might as well attend the seminar with another form of visa if the host organization first offers it on the basis of its importance of his presence at the seminar. He does not want to bring it up first because he thought if they thought his presence was necessary and critical, it could not be unexpected and impossible to use his tourist visa but in the end it did not happen in that way. Since it would take time to issue the visa from the U.S. embassy, he even used some networks (by headmaster’s active will) to get it earlier. But it failed as well. Even though he already had a tourist visa, he needed a J-1 visa; it was necessary for an official honorarium to the host organization. Although he understood what happened to him was his lack of luck, what he was most infuriated with was that when the embassy needed another

document to confirm the delay of the seminar, they did not notify the expected date.

Thus he cannot expect the date given their usual arbitrary administrative process

regarding a visa, which symbolizes the unequal relationship between the two nations.

He decides to send an official letter to the host organization stating the whole process

in detail urging the organization to demonstrate the administrative process of a visa to

the embassy and reconsidering the organization's regulation of the J-1 visa. He got a

reply saying, "We are afraid that our invitation was not fulfilled because of

inapprehensible difficulties. Your experience confirms to us that colonialism in Korea

not disappear yet but still do exist" (294). This last sentence is cited as evidence that

the novel is an anti-Americanism one by nationalists. But what Pak really pinpoints

lies in the other statements. The male protagonist feels embarrassed at the statement in

their enclosed letter to the U.S. embassy: "You treated him, a public literary figure as

authoritative as you do to other normal Korean people. It could not be possible if he

was Nadine Gordimer (Nobel laureate for literature in 1991) from South Africa" (295).

Out of shame and humiliation, he lost his speech. He then blurts out, "They think we

are worse than South Africa" (297). And his wife immediately retorts "What is with

South Africa?" This is not meant to literally compare two nations; this is an instance

of how embarrassed and mortified he was in regards to the letter. It is accurate that

Pak wants to reveal how colonial, unjust macro-power relationship between the two



nations is substantiated into daily life through a case of a simple visa to the United States. But what the protagonist was most embarrassed and humiliated by was not simply the embassy's authoritative and irresponsibly rigid administrative management, but rather the host organization's "enlightened compassion," another aspect of colonialism and being content to express their rage against colonialism redefining Korea as the colonized and privileging their position rather i.e. practically changing the J-1 visa only regulation for the official honorarium in such an exceptional case.<sup>86</sup>

Both writers question gender relations and provide new grounds to approach this question of gender, nation and knowledge production of sex trade in camptowns and representation (of interlocutors). The importance of their representation in the novels is beyond their divergence from existing pervasive narratives. It is critical that they

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<sup>86</sup> Along with an anthropologist Veena Das, Wanseo Pak has influenced my intellectual imagination for this research. Because she is a novelist, she does not present consistent theoretical tools which political scientists are familiar with. And yet, as I implied in revisiting the discourses in literary works, it is not possible to distinguish between literature and politics, and cannot underestimate the very political nature of any literary works. Through prolific works, she presents varying issues such as macro-micro power relationship, power, compassion, class, and women's issue. But different methodologies of writing she takes from existing feminism and unfamiliar insights into each issue have often caused (young) feminists' misreading as well as male critics' masculine interpretations (Chohan 1994).

One more thing I want to add is that in comparison to her Korean originals, English translations do not fully convey the unique nuance and tone of the original including mine here mainly due to fundamentally incommunicable nature of translation as well as the translators' responsibility. Even in the novel "J-1 Visa" (1998) through the protagonist, Pak addresses the political nature of translation in global context. His novel was translated into English by a bilingual translator. He came to know she didn't and could not convey the deeper nuances of his Korean original when she called him to ask the simple unique Koreans which she could know through a dictionary instead of asking the deeper meaning of sentences and intent which is needed. He criticizes her lack of insights and arrogance she dared to do with her (colonialist, unconscious) impudence of bilingual capacity without any passion and full understanding of the original: "It is to kill a writer beyond insult for a translator to translate any work which she/he does not be moved only with confidence at bilinguality" (278). In this context, I want to say that I rather focus on the meaning and intent on what the writer wants to call into question.

have taken completely different assumptions and approaches from both existing progressive nationalist and hegemonic feminist rhetoric in that they provide us with several issues in the process of knowledge production as well as the representation of the women in the sex trade.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The underlying and outright anxiousness surrounding the Korean women's sexual liaisons with U.S. servicemen are inevitably relevant to the persistent naturalization of a nation-state which is definitely constituted by the national women's body and a biologically essentialist concept of race. The central reason why sex between races and their offspring have always been viewed as "unnatural" is that "their very existence challenges the neat distinction between the colonizer and the colonized in colonial context or the boundaries between nations based on a biologically essentialist notion of racial purity" (Stoler 2002).

Thus it is not surprising that the issue of women in the sex trade in the camptowns has been mostly deployed in a Korean nationalist discourse and practice. Furthermore, feminist scholarship questioning this issue in terms of women's oppression is also understandable. However anti-Americanism in Korea and nationalism in the discourse of colonialism is much complicated by moral authority in terms of reasoned reflection

on oppression caused by unequal two nations of U.S. and Korea and the progressive nature of the simultaneous progression of a movement of democratization.

Unfortunately, this has been often (mis)understood and has been emphasized by the trope of priority to nation over other secondary issues such as gender and class both in nationalist narratives and existing, visible feminist rhetoric. Middle class (Korean) feminists often end up with a national priority in relation to gender when representing the women in the sex trade and has created class based (mis)representations of the women. I demonstrate that in spite of the binary focus on nation and gender, two main strands of discourse -feminist rhetoric and nationalist narratives- have shared class based views on the women in the sex trade. Further we should reach reasoned analysis of the constitutive nature of Korean nationalism in terms of colonialism without resorting to patriarchal nationalism and utilization of class biased women's suffering. Such a stance is also based on the recognition that the nation-state itself is operated by gender and class prescription.

By exemplifying some works such as Korean novelists Sojin Kim and Wanseo Pak whose works on sex trade are underestimated and misread, I disprove the necessary priority of nation and sexuality in the discourse of the sex trade (the seemingly inevitable, overarching determination of nation on the one hand and women's exploitation and assertive forms of resistance on the other hand) and even

the relationship between interlocutors and objects in the process of knowledge production: “Just as women drank the pain so that life could continue, so men longed for martyrdom by which they could invite the evil back upon themselves and humanize the enormous looming images of nation and sexuality” (Das 2007).

In the following chapter, I attempt to demonstrate that women in the sex trade neither identify nor recognize their identity and lives in the trope of nation and sexuality.

## **Chapter 4: An Analysis of the Material Lives of Women in the Sex Trade: Work, Identity, and (Re)Inhabitation of a World<sup>87</sup>**

### **1. A Fundamentally Different Question**

My focus in this chapter is not on the sex trade in camptowns itself because, technically, there are already voluminous studies of demographic features on the subject. As I shall further discuss, the real problem with the studies of sex trade is the fundamentally constrained methodologies and biased presumptions (Agustín 2007, Cook 1998, Lerum 1999). Most importantly, I am strongly suspicious of fetishism of sexuality in accounting for women in the sex trade. As Daniels (1984) nicely notes, “the women in the sex trade are given no identity from this role and no location beyond the territory of her work place” (1). Why are their whole lives always described as if they do not have a life without sex trade experience? Why are their identities and own accounts always used to explain something “sexual”? Such a tendency of fetishism of sexuality is not only deep-seated and powerful, but also a critical reason to reproduce the “powerless victim” by ignoring their dynamic process of dis/identification from the trade and by limiting their identity to “always fixed place related to sexuality throughout their whole lives.” While the discourse on

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<sup>87</sup> The phrase, (Re)inhabitation of a world is borrowed from Das (2007).

“identity crisis” of Amerasians is consistently raised in the literature, the question of women’s identities are either limited to sexualized one or little discussed.

In making sense of women’s material lives, I begin with a fundamentally different question: “How do people, particularly the less powerful, ‘inhabit’ the world?” This question is the same as the one posed by Veena Das, an anthropologist, in her book *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (2007). Its fundamental concern is with the relationship between individuals and crucial events in India. In her writing of the 1947 India/Pakistan division, Das visits the many incidents of violence that took place, concentrating particularly on the kidnapping and raping of women as well as the occurrence of unwanted children. She writes about how these women experienced violence and how those memories were not forgotten or disappeared. She further explores how the memories were re-established in the daily lives of the women especially through their family and kin. What I take away from her analyses are her critiques of the crude division between power and resistance and her insight into the relationship between violence and subjectivity, which is explained through the concept of “poisonous knowledge” (which will be discussed in detail in the following section).

However such a transformation of inquiry seems to be inappropriate and unfamiliar in the study of sex trade. The difficulty, needless to say, is related to

pervasive methodologies in existing sex trade literature. Despite a variety of studies on this topic and prostitution all over the world, the methodologies utilized in existing literature are much more formalized. Two familiar and pervasive methodologies are the historical analysis of the sex trade as a structural force and theoretically dichotomous debates such as pro sex work versus anti sex work, choice versus force, structural victims of oppression versus women's agency, and work versus sexual exploitation.

My examination/critiques of such methodologies begin with the actual discrepancies between the accounts of the women involved in the sex trade and the accounts of the anti-sex work feminists and NGOs. Although the actual discrepancies are discernable among researchers and activists, they are not often discussed or theorized. The inconsistencies which range from positions on sex trade and U.S. troops to women's self-recognition<sup>88</sup> have tended to result in binary debates regarding

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<sup>88</sup> In addition to the perception of the sex trade, the noticeable discrepancy is the local people's differentiation of their protests against discrimination and violence caused by U.S. troops from anti-Americanism. Due to the dependence of the economy of women and local people, local people wanted to differentiate their protest against violence and discrimination against U.S. troops and the national sovereignty by anti-Americanism activists. Although it would not be difficult to recognize, this issue has been neglected by academicians and (both nationalist and feminist) activists. It is the distinction between nationalist motive opposing to the perceived violence they impose on national sovereignty and pragmatic one objecting object to bases due to the way they function (Calder 2007, 84; in the Korean context, nationalist motive encompasses pragmatic one but it is worthy taking the term itself). See McCaffrey 2002 as well for this point (By exemplifying a grassroots movement against the U.S. Navy's bombing in Vieques, Puerto Rico, she presents the Vieques resistance as having been marked not by nationalists or anti-American sloganeering, but by a heightened sense of cultural identity and attachment to the island, and by animosity against reoccupation of high-middle class native people and American soldiers).

the sex trade such as sex versus work and exploitation versus choice. It is well known that even pro-sex work academicians and activists reproduce the binary framework because the question itself is grounded on binary approach. I share Kari Lerum's point of view in "Twelve-Step Feminism Makes Sex Workers Sick" (1999) where she questions the logic and methodology of the theories on the reproduction of trafficking and victimization strategy: "the argument over whether sex work is either exploitative or liberating is a ridiculous one that produces ridiculous conclusions, and that this debate had little relevance to the complex, contradictory, and widely varied experiences of sex workers" (8). Because the basis of the questions is limited and prejudiced, even the arguments of feminist scholars and activists arguing on behalf of the sex workers seem to end up confirming the division itself rather than disrupting or overcoming. This reproduces the binary debate of pro versus anti-sex work.<sup>89</sup> To

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This is beyond the range of this research, but further research is to be conducted since the movement of the transformation of U.S. bases is in progress and the voice of civilians is not heard in the process.

<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, theoretically, the dichotomy between sex and work is false and essentially patriarchal in that it reflects the male experience of a separation between sexuality and work while denying the possibility of the female experience (Golder and Allen 1979, 17). The women working in sex-typed jobs (work specified as women's work) frequently have to sell or exchange sexual services and favors (Daniels 1984, 12). "Domestic and caring work share many characteristics and dangers with some kinds of sex work; numerous migrants take on both kinds of jobs when trying to acquire as much money as possible in a short amount of time, and abuse and labor-related problems are rife among and labor-related problems are rife among them all" (Agustín 2005a, 223). Even for the nature of the sex trade itself, it is apparent that sex work is labor. Wilson (2004) nicely points to this: "The sex industry is oriented to the customers, an orientation that is inscribed into the architecture and space of the go-go bars. Bars sell spectacle and fantasy, affection and flattery, and access for an array of available young women... Women learn how to engage in flattering and cajoling interactions, to caress thighs and lie about looks. (Thus sex work is a labor which is) a form of knowledge creation, offering socialization that can be seen as an education. Dancing, selling ladies drinks, contracting for time and erotic services, and navigating commercial sexuality are



paraphrase Cook's expression (1998), we need to break down the dichotomization of marriage-like relationships and commercial sex rather than trace the origins of prostitution to historical slavery.<sup>90</sup> It is also important to note that one of the fundamental reasons for devaluing the discrepancies and subsequent underdeveloped theorization of sex work is the explanation of the habitual tendency of "doable problems," which never could be "doable" per se but should be something small, simple, and contained (Lerum 1999, 19-21). Such a tendency is substantiated into standard research methodologies such as the pull-in factor in the sex industry, detailed descriptions of sex work, hardships of sex workers which are mostly "socially desirable and acceptable," as well as the contribution of the sex industry towards the national economy. Thus my position on these discrepancies is that the women's personal narratives should be more closely considered and then built into theories.

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learned" (79-89). That does not mean that the work is easy to do, of course. It depends mostly on work environments, work systems in each club, and even individual dispositions. While some women have a hard time, for instance, selling drinks because they lack characteristics such as approachability, charisma, quick wit, flattery, and so on, others make it easier by learning how to handle customers (personal communication with Arinjin, immigrant woman).

<sup>90</sup> See Wilson 2004 and Agustín 2003a, b, 2004, 2005a, b, and 2006 for methodologically useful, transformative works on sex trade. In Wilson's case, she presents foreign oriented sex trade in a Bangkok go-go bar as a form of labor by "juxtaposing" other forms of work while exploring the gendered nature of the conceptions of economy and the economic nature of social identities. Laura Agustín, who works with many related institutions and immigrants working in the European sex industry, has attempted to disrupt familiar myths around sex trade through several works. Rather than merely suggesting how immigrant women involved in the European sex industry are agents, she radically questions deep theoretical assumptions and problems of discourses on the sex trade: "impossibility to prove or define" such concepts as love and the separation between body and mind, practical inseparableness between "good" domestic works and "bad" sex works, and a myth of fixed place/site and sex - "the sexual moment need not occupy a central place within the whole experience (2005b); sex industry sites do not serve solely sexual desires (2003b)".

Technically, when employing interviews, I contextualize rather than generalize them because, once again, a variety of every individual life cannot be “doable” in principle. With such contexts in mind, my analysis of the women’s lives is focused on what I witnessed and the women’s reconstruction of their lives.

I have explored how and why the contested essence of the issue of sex trade in camptowns center on something related to liaisons with foreigner nationals and sexuality in public discourse and academic debates in chapter 3. Yet, from the narratives and accounts I have collected, the repetitive and appreciable themes were lifetime employment, adjustment to past experiences and involvement with U.S. serviceman and various current situations. The women’s situations and problems, which mostly involved NGOs, ranged from economic hardship to familial problems such as problems with children and husbands, legal problems with previous American husbands and poor health conditions (MSP 2005). To some women, rearing children is a more urgent matter than revisiting past violent experiences. To a married woman, the relationship between herself and her husband is a more urgent and crucial issue to deal with. The overwhelming biased perception surrounding women in the sex trade in terms of sexuality and the past experience of sex trade has prevented us from appreciating such commonsense facts. Furthermore, regardless of the age difference or specific personal background, I found that the lives of Korean women include:

continuous mobility in search of employment, constant job switching, the determined role of laborer (which makes me reaffirm that sex work is not a matter of sex but actually work), solitude throughout life, and/or no current ties to family or kinship. It is not surprising that these characteristics have been presented as apparent evidence of the poor, lonely and miserable lives of women in the sex trade. However specific contexts are more nuanced, complicated, and their own recognition of these features is quite different from what is usually interpreted in existing studies and in public discourse.

Along with such themes, the most common and appreciable attitude that struck me during my fieldwork and interviews and thus which I want to attempt to explain, was that almost all the women studied did not “justify” their experiences in the sex trade nor “defend” them. They neither identify those experiences as sex works or intentionally negate their involving sexually with foreign nationals. Concretely, the mood among the women ranged from being completely and unconsciously indifferent about their social recognition, to firm and straightforward responses on the social stigmas of the sex trade, as well as controlled/prepared narratives (answers) which others expected about the practice. Outright responses on the social stigmas of the sex trade were extremely rare. The most common response did not justify their work and past. That was not a “simple negation” of their “shameful” past sex trade experiences

and engagements with foreign nationals through a silence to strangers. It was also beyond a temporary strategy of interviews where they controlled the contents and levels of what they wanted to speak. In existing literature, such a response has been interpreted as (passive) fatalism on one hand (Yoo 1993) and a sense of shame, pain, fear, mistrust of strangers (K. Moon 1997, x) and low-self esteem from staff members of NGOs on the other hand. In contrast to such existing interpretations, I approach this through the lens of the nature of sex trade, identity, and (re)inhabitation of a world. I argue that they do not need to defend and justify what they had to go through to myself or to anyone else because the sex trade is on the continuum with other mostly informal economics as (temporary) work, including legal marriage through a woman's life course. This further explains the fact that they do not "identify" themselves as sex workers either. Even though some demographic characteristics will be discussed, my primary analysis begins with their reservations on the sex trade, and is focused on the invisible and subtle ways in which they maneuver their lives.

## **2. Reading of Reticence on (Past) Practice of the Sex Trade**

### **2-1. Plausible, Simultaneous Reasons**

The reasons for their reticence on the practice of sex trade include: not being involved in the sex trade any more, the positive role of time, technical/intentional

control in the process of interviews for various reasons,<sup>91</sup> different/diverse stances on sexual liaisons with foreign nationals, and subsequent patient work in re-narrating their past and lives (which is often confused with “fatalism”).

What I mean by the active role of time does not simply imply that time automatically heals traumatic past experiences. Rather, time gives them new or positive interpretations of their pasts: “Time is not purely something represented, but is an agent which ‘works’ on relationship, allowing them to be interpreted, rewritten, scratched over, as different social actors struggles to author stories in which collectivities are created or recreated” (Das, 2007, 87; emphasis in original). For example, the case of a Korean soldier in Wanseo Pak’s short novel, “Granny Flowers in those Heartless Days” (1997) in chapter 3, reflects this active role of time.

In a practical sense, not working in clubs and talking about their stories could be an important, practical factor in explaining the reservation. We can confirm this through a comparison of the narratives of immigrant women. The main difference between the narratives of young immigrant women and those of the elderly Korean women interviewed is related to their current (work) situation. That is, what young immigrant women are going through is a “condensed” facet of a woman’s life in relation to intensively genderized and sexualized systems, working in clubs and

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<sup>91</sup> The complicated power relations in the process of interviews, i.e., the questions of how and why they control their narratives will be discussed in chapter 5.

maintaining relationships with American boyfriends or husbands in which elderly Korean women have already experienced. Thus the woman's current life cycle is condensed into working at the clubs as a bartender or a dancer (including running away and engaging in other jobs), (long term) relationships with GI partners, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and expatriation or moving to another country (MSP 2005). Since immigrant women are working in clubs and are involving themselves with their customers, the focus of the narratives (current lives) are mainly about their entanglements with their GI boyfriends' (partner's) financial, emotional, and symbolic resources (Askew 1999, 1). As I implied in the introduction, I define young immigrants as workers/entertainers. The ways in which they maneuver through work environments and their lives are well documented. In studies on the sex trade, especially works on counterarguments of sex work as work and agency, the women's maneuvering strategies are well addressed as follows: enhancing income, preserving personal freedom by discouraging undesirable clients by pleading illness or menstruation, deception, exploiting jealousy and personalizing relationships (Askew 1999, 11-21, Baek 1999). Similarly, Jiyeon Oh (1997) suggests that "through deception, taking advantage of/extorting GIs, and ignoring, disparaging of GIs, they think of themselves as equal, they could become victim and inflictor. With these forms of resistance, they could comfort themselves and could do positive self-

recognition” (68).<sup>92</sup> The labor of love is more often referred to as strategy (Cheng 2007). A filmmaker and former staff member from the MSP addressed the condensed nature of immigrant women’s lives: “Gijichon is kind of love republic!”; “Dongducheon is a city of mating. The kind of big game controls here, to women, it’s kind of the mating game. Mating and survival is all related. It doesn’t matter if I date someone since I am Korean and live with my parents in Korea. If I date some and breaks up, that is it. Of course, there are just pain of love and pain of break ups. (But) For them, when they love someone like anybody else, the result is unbelievable.”<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore the current frequent and dynamic “migration experiences” of young women are distinctive in comparison with the Korean woman’s (comparatively) internal mobility. However, apart from the condensed sexualized situation of work, current environments and immigration, I found little difference between them in terms of anxiety or excitement towards the new environment, hardships relative to immigration, adaptation to uncertainty, diverse work experience and multiple forms of

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<sup>92</sup> The strategies could include running away, moving from club to club for better work environments, (sham) marriages, and reporting to the police. The strategies of immigrant women working in clubs currently could be heard from Korean women who were involved with them: “If they (immigrant women) are not happy albeit it was trivial, they just came to the police saying that club owner enforced. It turned out it was nothing. I could say it was them that wanted to do it” (an interviewee working as mamasan in Collective for Sexuality Minority Culture Pinks 2004); “I could see their only aim is marriage. If they went to Korea to make good money, they should have made effort to get money. They don’t make any effort. ‘How can I marry? How can I spend money? How can I extort money from GIs?’ That is all what they think. Since I had worked long here, I could see in no time” (a former sex worker/Korean). More specifically, a Russian woman narrates that “I don’t text any GIs. It was only around pay day I text them saying ‘how you have been?’ It’s mean...right?” (MSP 2007) Women’s strategies in order to maneuver their lives are varying and factual.

<sup>93</sup> Interview, June 2007.

subversions (Baek 1999, MSP 2007, Yea 2004, 2005). Needless to say, the question of citizenship (and the condition of undocumented status many women are confronted with) results in many material and psychological burdens on them. For instance, the condition of the undocumented status many women are confronted with constrains the women's mobility and gives rise to practical consciousness of "nonbelongness, or a discomfort that constantly affects their behavior, attitudes, and feeling" (Parreñas 2001, 197). As Yea (2005, 182-3) puts it, "anxiety -tensions and difficulties that produce distress, uncertainty and heightened vulnerability whilst operating as migrants in a transnational field-" is the overriding theme of their experiences of negotiating transitions between sites of identity, along with daily social discrimination based on economic nationalism and racism in Korea.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> I came to have a close relationship with a Filipino immigrant woman named Arinjin (36). She came to Korea in 2004 with an E-6 visa. She also worked in Japan twice before, for six months at a time as a singer in clubs for Japanese business men. In the Philippines, after her second stay in Japan, she did not have enough economic security. She left her daughter (16 years old) and family, and came to Korea to do the same work she did in Japan. However, at the Korean clubs, she was expected to push the customers to buy drinks or else she would not get paid. She worked for one week as a regular entertainer. One night the owner brought some of his friends to the club, so they locked the doors and left the club open only to his friends who expected full sexual service. When she fought with the owner, he threatened to send them all back to the Philippines. She said, "That's fine." The owner negotiated and agreed to make her the manager of the other Filipinas and agreed to not force them to provide full sexual service if they did not want to. After working as a manager for a week, she stopped working there; she went to work in other places: a restaurant, a telecom shop, and in several factories. In the process, she met a GI who fathered her baby. He was married to a Russian woman, but he promised to divorce her soon. But he finally went back to his Russian wife. It was after she left him that she discovered that she was pregnant. She wanted an abortion and he promised to help pay for it. But he did not respond afterward and she missed the window of time to have the abortion. With the MSP's support, she sued him over the paternity suit and monthly child support on June 2007. The lawsuit is still ongoing. The response of the U.S. military authorities and the U.S. embassy in Korea had shown indifference or given any information on him on the basis that she was not in a legal marriage with the GI (which was the typical response to such a case). Since I came back to the U.S. after my fieldwork research,



## 2-2. Work and (Sexualized) Identity

Among the various reasons for the women's reticence on their past sex trade experiences, one fundamental basis stands out about the rest: the perspective of the sex industry is seen as a continuum of other temporary and informal works. It could be confirmed by the fact that the continual job switching throughout their entire lives was one of the most popular and repetitive themes. This further explains why they did not identify themselves as sex workers or prostitutes.

Let me first consider the contexts of labor in varying social conditions. As most studies on the sex trade have noted, working in the sex industry is a viable resource of livelihood among a woman's limited options in times of social distress (the Korean War), economic hardship, personal crisis and even "chance." For women in their 60s-70s, the most conspicuous historical event was the War followed by the station of U.S

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the last story I heard from her was that she could no longer get financial support from the MSP because she reached the maximum financial support assigned to each client of NGOs, and the lawsuit itself was not productive. But since she needed to continue the lawsuit, she could not return to the Philippines. She felt desperate because in spite of her whole effort to get her story published in the mass media, there was no progress at all. Now she is working in a bread factory. Since there are a few women partaking in legal action against GIs or using the mass media (the newspaper article I translated from Korean to English to give her turned out that there were some misinformation and was full of victimized images with a Korean nationalist tone), her active way of confronting her situation was conspicuous and remarkable. She had documented all e-mails, pictures and all kinds of evidence of their relationships. But the institutional process in many aspects (Filipina immigrant with an expiring visa suing GI in Korea required many time-consuming process despite the automatic extension of a visa in case of the lawsuit, and necessary cooperation of the U.S. military authorities which have not gotten) was much more complicated and was not productive as she expected.

Such situations often cause the recurrent problems in which NGOs intervene: breach of contract, the enforcement of sexual service in working in clubs, problems related to stay and expatriation after running away from the clubs (the club owner could report her as a illegal runaway), problems brought from co-habitation and marriages with GIs and Korean men; medical problems (MSP 2005).

troops in Korea which created massive job opportunities.<sup>95</sup> These women were considered the second generation of militarized prostitutes working as “house girls,” “coffee girls,” “hair dressers” or “cleaners.”<sup>96</sup> In contrast to the “essentially tragic and destructive” image of the War,<sup>97</sup> in actuality, many women participated in the economic activities during the wartime (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1987, I. Lee 2004, 2006). I. Lee (2004) points out that the women were increasingly involved in economic participation which resulted in a change of the labor pattern in the 1950s. She documents that the increase in participation in economic activities emerged not only in agriculture, but also in small businesses such as hawkers, street vendors,

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<sup>95</sup> Three of the women in their 60s-70s had casual liaisons with soldiers when they worked as laundresses and house girls on the military bases. After three years of working as a laundress, one interviewee lived with a GI and had a baby with him. Another woman, who was kicked out because of her infertility, began working as a house girl running errands and doing household chores, which led to her work as a waitress at the base for extra money. The last woman, in her mid 40s, was born and raised near the camptowns. She married a GI who eventually returned to the U.S. without her. With the support of the MSP, she was able to finalize her divorce two years ago.

<sup>96</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, August 15, 1962.

<sup>97</sup> One of the most common and heartrending cases of the Korean War was Yeongja Wike's case, a protagonist in a documentary film, *And Thereafter 1* (H. Lee 2003). She was with her Korean husband and four children when the War started. One day, her husband just disappeared. It turned out later that he was forced to go to North Korea. For six months, he did not show up; she needed to take refuge. On the journey to find refuge, all her children died. She also met her current American husband. Then one day the Korean husband returned and wanted her to come back to him. But she couldn't go back to her Korean husband, thinking how she could be with him with her already fallen body. Throughout the film, the protagonist suffered from the abuse of family members, especially her eldest son. Due to the sexual harassment of her American husband's own daughter long time ago, the daughter also held a grudge against her: The daughter resented her that her mother did nothing when she was harassed (but she did not know at the time) and got no financial help as much as other two brothers. She and her husband barely speak to one other.

According to the director's expression, the family is completely dysfunctional where there is no love assumed in a normal family life (Grace E Jang's interview with Hosup Lee 2005). In the interview, Lee interpreted that the protagonist was not weak but strong. If I expand the interpretation further, it was her sense of responsibility and love for her children that helped her struggle to keep the family and continue “daily labor” in the pepper garden to make her a strong agency as she mentioned, “without the work in the pepper garden, I couldn't live.”

housemaids and seamstresses (Ibid., 89-100). For women in their 40s-50s, the crucial factor was parental poverty. For example, one interviewee (54) left home, at the age of 16, because of economic difficulties and worked as a housemaid and a bus conductor for a while. She stopped by a *gijichon* with her friend for fun and stayed one night. The next day, her friend snuck out and left her behind; when the house owner, who was actually a brothel keeper, asked for the rent she didn't have any and was required to stay and work in order to repay the debt. That was how she was first introduced to the camptowns. She said that her friend did not "sell" her on purpose, but that it just happened (As a motive, this could be interpreted as economic difficulties, trafficking, deception, and even fate). Other motives include: personal crisis such as a broken marriage and problems with lovers or family members, a partner's infidelity and domestic violence, economic deprivation/parental poverty and the mother's profession. Such factors as personal crisis and parental poverty are not quite different from the findings of existing studies on the women in the sex trade in camptowns (C. Kim 1975, E. Lee 1965, H. Lee 1992, J. Oh 1997), even though the social/historical settings are quite different.<sup>98</sup> What is to remind at this point is that

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<sup>98</sup> Engin Lee (1965) studied the status of women in Yongjugol (Yeonpung-ri in Paju-si; It was one of the biggest camptowns in Gyeonggi-do in the 1960s and closed in early 1970s; It is also the background of Oksun Pak's autobiography of 1965) and Gwangam-dong in Dongducheon-si. The study included 697 women in which he presented their ages, education levels, marital statuses, motives, previous jobs, religions, financial issues, and family support. According to his study, 89.8 % were unmarried; the main motives for entering the sex trade was economic deprivation (48.9%), family disputes (14.1 %), and the opportunity to earn money (11.2 %); others included broken families, broken relationships with lovers, vanity,

women's entry into the sex industry is circumstantial and gradual (Walkowitz 1980,

13-5).<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, if we take "more practical, complementary ideas of

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seduction, and licentiousness. Chun Kim (1975) studied the status of 1,109 registered women in the sex trade in Anjeong-ri in Pyeongtaek-si in 1973. The main motive of entry into the sex industry concurred with Lee's findings: 41% of women said economic deprivation was the ultimate motivator. The other common motives were family problems (17.7 %), broken relationships with a lover (11.4 %) a friend's lure (15.9%), broken marriages (3.2%), luxuries (8.4 %), and other (2.4 %). Hisuk Lee's study was conducted in 1992. Although the area she sampled was not specified, her study shows similar results: economic deprivation/minimal family support (13%), educational delinquency (8%), employment agency/brothel keeper (44%), curiosity to marry GIs (28%); others (7%). Main reasons to leave home were educational delinquency (12%), economic deprivation and family problem (8%), broken marriages or broken relationships with a lover (13%), curiosity/friend's seduction (39%), and other (2%). Jiyeon Oh (1997) studied on women in Bosan-dong in Uijeongbu-si. Unlike existing literature, she focused on the woman's self-recognition and strategies to maneuver their lives.

All studies point to economic hardship and personal crisis as main motives. Another feature of studies in the 1960-70s is that moral standards such as vanity, luxury, and licentiousness are consistently presented.

<sup>99</sup> Because the narratives of most informants were composed of critical events, which were considered to determine their life course, specific feelings of personal crisis were elusive and unspecific, and, thus, it was hard to find "the way that conditions in the life courses of these women have framed their decision to become involved in the sex trade" (Askew 2002, 265). Several essays in *I Make You Reformed: Essays and Confessions of Condemned Criminals, Gangsters, Delinquents and Prostitutes* (This book was published in 1980 by Reverend Jaejeong An, are written by inmates, juvenile delinquents, and women in the sex trade. There are documents of ten women who worked in camptowns, and are now involved in public vocational training institutes. The names are fictitious, and their descriptions of physiological states are noticeable. It has each of their personal histories, the reasons and processes of entry into the sex trade industry, and hardships of disciplines in the institutes. Each essay tends to end with a positive evaluation of the institutes and gratitude of the Christianity. One of essays reveals emotional and gradual process:

As an ordinary and weak human being, I graduated from women's high school and begin working. I was pessimistic and felt a sense of inferiority. Father's chronic illness, family's poor environment which would not have any possibility to improve. I felt a sense of inferiority whenever I saw the bright face of college students. I felt a desire to transform in such a monotonous daily life... Hostess? It has been repeating through my head for a long time. The inability to forget these wonders forced to walk towards the red light streets. It was my first time visiting gijichon, and it was exciting to see the night view filled with desire and wonder. I took several shots and endless hallucinogens during the night. After a month, the fact that I am living in gijichon left me sickening feeling and it left me to think that I am going in the wrong direction, but the fact that I was falling in love with American soldier made me think of this as a fairy tale. (31-3)

Such a frustration with life substantiated into the boredom of other work that involved long hours for little pay, a desire to change their lives, personal disillusionment at personal circumstances, and even curiosity for the foreign world all of which are critical factors that influence the decision to work in camptowns.

reasonableness, or the possibilities of the living without any absolute necessities or certainties” (Toulmin 2001) in perceiving social phenomena, it is not difficult to find out how the motives are not exclusive per se in reality. Another issue I want to add for the circumstances is that in contrast to the public discourse, which states that women in camptowns only engaged in sexual contact with foreign troops, many women were actually married to Korean men throughout the course of their lives. Almost half of the informants left or divorced their Korean partner because of the man’s infidelity, violent behavior and/or the woman’s subsequent desire to escape an unwanted or broken relationship.<sup>100</sup>

The common routes of entry are the friendship networks (which is usually called friend’s lure in existing studies), acquaintances, employment agencies, advertisements and human trafficking. Seokha Kim (1991), who was a disc jockey (DJ) for 20 years in the camptowns, stated in his autobiography that 98 % of the women in camptowns entered through job advertisements. Employment agencies are a very common way for “those people who have no other networks and no higher education” (to borrow several interviewees’ comments) to find a means. The path to getting these jobs is not divisive but combined throughout their life course.

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<sup>100</sup> Two interviewees were practically kicked out because of their infertility and their husband’s subsequent infidelity. Several interviewees left home, in part, to the husband’s infidelity, violent behaviors, and financial instability. One woman addressed rape was the fundamental motive for her entrance into the sex trade. Some left home because of relationship breakdowns with other family members such as sister-in-laws and stepmothers.

Most women, before leaving home, did household chores and farmed. As the previous narratives demonstrated, leaving home was a fundamental step in employment. Another important feature of the women's lives is that they experienced more commonplace, lower-paying jobs doing things such as household chores, working as a nanny or maid, factory laborer, bus conductor, and waitressing.<sup>101</sup>

Similar to conventional studies, the most common forms of employment before the sex trade among interviewees were domestic servitude, also known as "sigmo" in Korean, and manufacture factory labor which were in demand and were paid minimal wage. Housemaids and nannies were the easiest jobs for women to find, but being a housemaid was notorious for its low wages, mistreatment by house owners, long work hours and sexual abuse such as rape and flirtation (I. Lee 2004, 115). Several interviewees recalled the rape when they were working as housemaids and nannies. One interviewee interpreted the rape as "Well, since I was poor and had no education background. That is why such a thing happened to person like me." Sunae Kang (77) recalled the hardships and feelings she experienced when she was a housemaid.

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<sup>101</sup> In Engin Lee's study (1965), 28.4% had previous jobs, 26.2% were housemaids, and 23.1% were factory laborers. In Chun Kim's study (1975), 56.8% had no previous work experience, 16.3% were factory laborers, 9.9% were waitresses in other clubs, 4.6% were students, 2% were bus conductors, and 10.4% did other things. In Hisuk Lee's study (1991), no previous work experience was 51% (15% married women), sales assistant/factory laborer was 17 %, clubs was 17%, and student was 6%. Cronstadt and Tov (1978) points out as well that most common jobs before becoming gisaeng (professional entertainer-dancer) in the 1970s are coffee house waitresses, bus conductors, restaurant waitresses, maids and attendants in a women's public bath facility.

I ended my life with being a housemaid, but there is a lot of crap in working for someone at their house. When I set the whole table up for meal, she would go and eat it with her husband. After she's done, she would tell me to eat the leftovers. I was a treasured daughter of my mother too and only girl. Am I a pet that keeps this house? But the husband was really nice. When I feel bad about something, he'd say that she's like that because she doesn't have any education. I guess she's treating me like a dog because I work for her.

In most cases, they began to work for brothel keepers and club owners and began experiencing longer relationships with GIs ranging from 1-2 months to 1-3 years, which included legal marriage. As I noted in chapter 2, most of the women I have studied experienced all stratifications of sex trade: freelancing, waitressing, and establishing longer relationships with GIs, including legal marriage.

Okseon Lee (61) worked as a freelance worker for five years ever since she came to gijichon at the age of thirty-five. She worked at a socks factory in Seoul for one year after she left her cheating Korean husband. She recalled the factory work experience:

The monthly salary at socks factory wasn't that much. I think it was about 30,000 won (Korean currency; \$30). What can I do with 30,000 won? It was an age when I wanted to buy new clothes, but I didn't. Others gave me clothes to wear and I wore it after I washed it. The salary wasn't that promising. Even though it was 30,000 won was big compared to other factories, but what the heck is 30,000 won?

She came with whatever money she had which afforded her a room to herself: "There wasn't deposit money back at this time. There was instead a monthly rent, so the cost was set and that's how I was able to survive. While living here, I didn't have fun with

American soldiers, as nothing really occurred or I didn't get into a relationship or immigrated somewhere else." While working, she realized that sex work was not as lucrative as she thought:

American soldiers gave me such a small amount of money, so I always kicked them out. I did not do anything that appeared harmful to me. I realized that working as a streetwalker was not the way for me, so after five years I gave up on this practice. I ran into a lot of troubles when it came to money. If the money is small, I kicked them (GIs) out. As I was married to my husband and so many negative things had occurred to me, I realized that Korean people and foreign people are all the same. I thought, ah, this is not it, so I stopped working after five years.

She lived with a GI for one year. Although he suggested she come live with him in the U.S., she could not accept his offer because she was still legally married before living in a camptown. Also, she was insecure with her education level and felt that she could not adjust well to life overseas. After working for five years in gijichon, she worked as a waitress in a Korean restaurant and as a domestic servant until recently. Because of her health problems, she could not work any longer.

Sanghi Pak (43) came to Seoul to live with her eldest sister and found work through a job agency working in a coffee shop doing chores. After hearing the dispute between her sister and brother-in-law during her stay, she left home and went to another job placement agency to find work at the age of 16. The first place she came to was near a Korean military base and was trafficked to gijichon in 1972. Since she had been in debt from the debt bondage system, it was not very easy to save money:



“When I first worked here, I already had been in debt for bed, agency fee... I think the (minimum) payment was 80 dollars. I mean, if I made less than that, we couldn’t calculate anything. If I earned more than 80 dollars, then it all makes sense. Half went to poju for rent and food.” As she got older, she still had debts and she found it difficult to work in the clubs. With the help of her close friend, who also used to work in camptowns, she stopped working in the club.

When I was addicted to drugs, I even went to jail for it. I got nerve breakdown when I came out. The music (in a bar) was blasting and I had so much debt with the club, and I didn’t have any more confidence. I just couldn’t get used to things. I was worried all the time because I didn’t know what to do after living like that all these years. I think I was in depression. I just wanted to die. I was just dazed then breakdown came again. I could see hallucination again. It was strange and then my friend would show me that it wasn’t real. She asked if she was going to help me get a loan... money... If that happened, I would be less pressure psychologically so I said it’d be good. She paid for it and the hallucination was gone after that. I had to give them money and work, but I wasn’t getting used it, so I went to a different club. They didn’t have customers, but I got used to them... I met a nice US soldier and lived with him for a while. I paid all my debt while living with a nice soldier.

She recently stopped working in the sex trade and has since worked in several restaurants and as a factory laborer near a camptown. She married a Korean man a few years ago and is currently working as a receptionist at a massage parlor.

As some narratives have already shown, after the women worked in clubs, freelanced as sex workers and engaged in long term relationships, many interviewees worked as waitresses, madams, managers in clubs, as well as domestic helpers.

Among the informants, there were none who lived with American husbands even though several women were still in legal marriages. The most common job they took was waitressing, which is also called “mamasan”<sup>102</sup> in camptown clubs even until older ages. Their work included not only taking orders on drinks, serving foods, and cleaning the club, but also managing immigrant women as in-between managers in the clubs. Some also took on temporary jobs whenever they had a chance including running (small) stores, restaurants and clubs. Most of the women I interviewed, except the elderly with serious health problems, were participating in some other type of economic activity. Jeonggil Nam (54) was one of the few people who complained directly to the director of the NGOs regarding the attitudes of the staff members. Her mother took her to a club in the camptown when she was 16. Before working in the camptown, she worked as a housemaid since she was ten. Like other women, she took on various jobs throughout her life.

I don't exactly remember until I was working in clubs. I think I did it until 33 or 34. After that, I worked by selling bread at one market and watermelon in the other, and I was a waitress at a pub and I worked in a night restaurant in Dongducheon too. I told you before about the owner who didn't pay my monthly salary, I did everything except

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<sup>102</sup> It is said that mamasans get about 350-700 dollars a month. In addition to the monthly salary, they also get the money earned from tips from the US soldiers, juice, and long night (overnight) fees. Therefore mamasans forced the foreign women to sell drinks and to go on a “long night” with US soldiers to make more money for themselves. The mamasan positions are not secure. There are about 2-5 mamasans in a club and when the business is slow or if US soldiers who are regulars come less often, mamasans are the first ones to be fired. Club owners hired mamasans to do the grunt work for the owners. This led to the severe mistreatment of foreign women (Collective for Sexually Minor Cultures Pinks, *Mamasan Remember Me This Way, Untold Story*, 2004, 28).

stealing. I found myself fearing about working now. Because I did so much, and I suffered so much from it. From the days that I worked in another person's house, and I would say, "phew..." the word sigmo (housemaid) is pretty degrading, you know? I was very ill-treated at a young age. I went to a place where I was a maid, where there I went to a place where I was a maid, where there were two older guys and a youngest who was the same age as me... We have briquette now, but there weren't any briquette so we needed to use tree pieces to start with fire. Whenever I woke up in the morning, the fire would have light out. There weren't any rice cookers then, so the impatient owner will start cursing at me. I would get hit while I will wash clothes while sitting down on a chamber pot. I would then get a nosebleed, the time when I was so young! Because of this, I really, "really" had a grudge against my mother, and that is why my life became so awkward.

After working in clubs, Nam came to the U.S. with her second American husband.

However, her economic hardships which she did not expect in the U.S., coupled with suspicions of her husband's affair, led her to return to Korea and began working in the clubs again. Her health is failing now and, with the support of the MSP, she is on welfare. Even after becoming religious (nam myoho renge kyo), she couldn't let go of the grudge against her mother for abandoning her in that place. She told me that she tried to understand her mother's actions and believed that there must have been a reason for what she went through.

As I noted in chapter 2, most women experienced various stratification of sexual liaisons throughout their lives. It is important to note that it includes legal marriages considering the very political, but too naturalized division between sex trade and marriage. It is not a new finding that even after they stop the practice of sex trade, they participate in diverse (informal) economic activities. Actually, it is quite a simple

point but has strangely been considered trivial. What I am suggesting is that their reservations about the sex trade necessarily revert to the nature of sex work, or sex trade on the continuum with other mostly informal economics as temporary work through women's life course. This seemingly simple finding, in fact, leads to a critical question regarding the identity: The women do not identify themselves as sex workers or prostitutes. Therefore, I challenge the pervasive depiction of their sexualized identity and then suggest an alternative perspective on their self-construction of their work experiences and lives trade by drawing on the concept of poisonous knowledge.

The fetishism of sexuality was far deeper and more pervasive in practice (and in academy) than I expected. I observed that the women's appearances such as make-up and clothing were subject to interpretation by staff members and volunteers from NGOs. Any behaviors, feelings, and attitudes the women portrayed were interpreted as something related to (exotic) "sex" as if their entire lives and identities were only constructed by sexuality. The assumption that they must/might be much different from (privileged) researchers accompanies some interesting processes in getting information. A young female researcher stated how she was prejudiced towards the women when she tried to make herself familiar with them in "their own way." She intended to approach them in a light manner and with make-up, which she usually did not wear, so that they felt that she was no different from them (Won 2003, 32). As she

confessed that she already had a prejudiced way of viewing these women, she envisioned these women to be assertive, vulgar and promiscuous. Jiyeon Oh (1997) in her essay on women's behaviors interprets women's "double attitudes" regarding the experience of the sex trade like this:

Women in *gijichons* show straightforward and open attitude to sexuality. They say they "enjoy" meeting GIs and having sex with them. This means a psychological strategy in making an effort to adapt their situations. While they say they "enjoy" the relationships with GIs, they show double attitude in that they condemn women who are promiscuous calling them "real whores." It reflects their guilt that they are not virgins which is based on the ideology of virginity in a society. The separation of body and mind implies the self-denial of not being a virgin physically. (71-6)

Such an interpretation is not atypical in feminist studies of the sex trade. The interpretation assumes that the identities of the women in the camptowns are always and infinitely framed within the lens of sexuality and the sex trade. Yet, the assumption that "something like the soul or real self is 'alienated' when sex occurs outside the context of 'love,' and that women are fatally damaged by this experience is a moral assumption. Some women feel this way and some find pleasure in prostitution, which only means there is no single experience of the body shared by everyone" (Agustín 2004, 88). Furthermore, in interpreting their narratives, such as "being more mature than normal women through their tough fate," Oh (1997) argues that by rationalizing their enforced situations as fate, they differentiate themselves from other normal women in order to get some self-comfort. However the enforced

self-comforting only reinforces the division between the sex trade women and normal women (Ibid., 64-77). Though they knew and acknowledged the differences between the lives of “normal women” and their own lives,<sup>103</sup> it was not simple self-comfort or self-rationalization. K. Moon’s (1997) understanding of the women’s identities has revealed a similar problem. She argues that “the overwhelming majority of the prostitutes have experienced a combination of poverty, low class status, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse even before entering the *gijichon* world. Their identities had already become one of ‘fallen’ women (because they had lost social status and self-respect from divorce, rape, sex and/or pregnancy out of wedlock)” (23, 3). The description of these circumstances is valid but it is somewhat misleading in that such a circumstance creates an identity of “fallen women.” This is partly because they do not recognize themselves as such and because the concept of “identity” cannot be used in such a limited way.

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<sup>103</sup> The question on the difference between normal women and women in the sex trade was not intended. One woman brought up in the course of interviewing this way:

When we old ladies gather, we cannot have a conversation because we lived in a completely different world. I lived by myself and these women have daughter-in-law and son and grandchildren. When they gather, all they do is to brag about their sons, daughter-in-laws, and grandchildren. I have nothing to brag about. I feel like a drop of oil in a bucket of water. That’s why I cannot hang out with these ladies. Do you understand? We lived the total opposite lives, that’s true, we had totally different lives. (Co-interviewer: Are you envious of them when they see them?) Not really, because I never had my own child. If I had a child, I would understand. I was never pregnant and never gave birth to a child. How can I know? Since I cannot get along with them, I have to separate from them... When they sit down and talk about their lives. When they talk about different things, I have nothing to say and don’t have anything to really listen to. I just come out and lay down at the big house. I just cannot hang out and be friends with them. I don’t know why, but maybe it’s because I’m special or bitchy... It’s because we lived in different environments... We lived differently.

The definition of identity varies according to the level of analysis (Barad 2001, Fernandes 2003, Hall 1996, Minh-ha 1989, Radhakrishnan 1994, Skeggs 1997, 2004). I draw on Skeggs's and Barad's understanding, among others, taking an intermediary position.<sup>104</sup> As Skeggs (1997) argues, "identities are not reflections of objective social positions which is how class is often theorized (if at all). Nor are the social positions essential categories. Identities are continually in the process of being re-produced as response to social positions, through access to representational systems and in the conversion of forms of capital" (95). On the basis of such a definition of identity, my analysis is premised upon further understandings that (transient) experience in the sex trade does not fix one's identity permanently, and that the process of identification of social class or categories employ various forms such as (positive) identification, dissimulation, disidentification from social positions and adjustment (Skeggs 1997).

Dongsuk Kim's (mid 40s) narrative demonstrates the identification of the working class (with harsh criticism of sex work). Kim left home at the age of 10 and began working as a maid. She had five other sisters and a brother who was the youngest; her

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<sup>104</sup> Although I technically take an intermediary concept of identity here, there are some more points I want to add: Minh-ha (1989) and Fernandes (2003) employ a more spiritual and ethical approach by dissolving the division between self and other and suggesting "the infinite layers of I" with which I agree. On the basis of Minh-ha's view on self, Fernandes (2003) presents a twofold process of disidentification: It rests on a letting of attachments to externalized forms of identity as well as to deeper ego-based attachment to power, privilege and control. At another level, disidentification means to create a different form of self, which does not need to resort to the traps, limitations and temporary security of identity (27)." It is quite critical transformative view on identity because it reminds us that whatever form it takes, the sense of belonging presumes exclusion.

mother only took great care of her brother, who was the only boy in her family. She was working as a maid in a club. The work was so tedious that she, eventually, went on to live with an American soldier. She was able to find her family in 1997 with the help of a police officer. She said that before meeting her family, she had a wild life, but after finding her family again, she had hope for a better future and wanted to live as long as she possibly could. It seemed like the family did not have any economic difficulties, but the relationship between her family did not proceed well. In the end, she did not keep in touch with the other family members except for one of her sisters.

She addressed one episode:

My family went to my home and had a conversation with them. During the conversation, someone mentioned commercial building, and I asked them what it meant, and the conversation was not able to go on. Later on, I heard from my mom that the youngest son told “Is this the way people can live in?” I think my mom was also ridiculous, Mom should not have told me the story anyway. My mom told me that the brother commented that my place was like for pigs. If this is not the place for humans, is he saying that I am either a cow or a pig... living in this place makes me a human too!

In another recollection, when Kim met her sister-in-law for the first time, she asked her if she ever saw her before this minute. Kim felt that her relatively middle class sister-in-law was being a hypocrite and that she felt some sort of psychological and financial security in her family because she was the only sister-in-law of family with only male children (Like other Korean families of her generation, the only son was



most favored and privileged of all his family). Thus when her sister-in-law called her “older sister (hyeongnim),” she sharply replied, “Have you ever seen me?” In social customs and in a legal sense, she was supposed to be called sister-in-law, hyeongnim. Yet Kim thought that it was hypocritical to be addressed by her sister-in-law as “hyeongnim” when she had never even met her before in addition to the practical relations between them. She did not want to make herself a burden to the family and she chose to stop communicating with them except for one younger sister. To add to the situation, the other family members did not contact her when her own mother passed away. Sometime later, her sister-in-law contacted her and persuaded her to get resident registration and a copy of the family registry. She later found that these documents were needed in order to submit written resignation so that all of the family possessions would go to the son. She was a necessary part of the process because all family members needed to agree in order to make the document binding. The oldest sister urged everyone not to be depressed about this incident, as the family always favored the son and she also told the rest of the sisters to just forget everything. She went to the office to ask why the documents were given to the sister-in-law, and the officer told her that he thought that the sister-in-law was a family member and did not think there would be a problem. In consequence she did not have anything else she could do.

Her responses in these episodes were striking and impressive to me not only because her expressive, assertive manner was conspicuous compared to other interviewees, but also because she identified herself as a lower class woman. When I shared Kim's narrative with a female staff member from a NGO, she interpreted her response (Kim's criticizing her sister-in-law's hypocrisy) as "envious" of what she did not have. The staff member's belief seemed to stem from the identification/identity of her own middle class identity. The reason why I was so sure of this identification with the female staff member's respective class was that she specified her privileged social class in our first interview. She indicated that while she was working with the women in the sex industry, she experienced conflicting circumstances and tensions due to their class differences which had often been addressed in fieldwork research (Wolf 1996). That is, her "essential" identification with her own middle class position made her draw the conclusion that the underprivileged always felt lacking and foreclosed the possibility of the interviewee's positive identification from her classed position. Usually Kim's response to her sister-in-law had been interpreted either as "unrespectable" or "uncivilized" which is a typical representation of the lower class women or envious, just as the staff did.

Meanwhile, Sunae Kang's (77) narratives were slightly different from the others in that she, straightforwardly, revealed her sensitivity to the other's degrading attitude,

and reveals identification of the working class through “disidentification.” She began her narrative describing how her husband had abused her during their one year marriage before the Korean War started. She was married when she was 17 years old; her husband abused her and she returned to her natal home year after. “When my body used to ache, my brothers were telling me that it’s because I was beat up all the time. Don’t even start talking about how I got beat up. That’s why I disgusted men. That’s why I’m living by myself now. My mom always told me to marry someone again. I told her, if you really like marriage, why wouldn’t you do that again?” When the War started, she was 19 years old.

Can you imagine? My youngest brother was 4 years old. Is there any food? Did I have any saved up money? No, we didn’t. We were out picking vegetables everyday. They were shooting everywhere and I was scared to walk around. I sold stuff at Ahyeon-dong (Seoul). Vegetables and you name it, I did it. I sold pancakes at Anjeong-ri. People say that I lived a hard life, but it’s nothing compared to what I went through during the War. I came to Seoul. The Han River bridge was broken because of the war and carriages and wagons were on the frozen Han river. I didn’t have any money with the 4 year old brother and the other brother. I lost them all while I was walking. I was walking around crying and ate when some ladies gave me food. The US soldiers were everywhere during those times. I was living like shit... but I’m rich now (compared to the past). Don’t even mention how much hardship I went through.

In addition to her various work experiences in a war torn environment, what struck me the most in Kang’s narratives was the fact that she emphasized how others had overlooked her throughout her life because she was poor and old, but continually emphasized the fact that she saw herself as a clean and refined person. While most

interviewees never attempted to explain themselves in the interviews, she was more than willing to provide insights into her personality. Her manner reflected the identification of class via disidentification: It was not spoken of in the traditional sense of recognition -I am working class- but rather, was displayed in their multitudinous effort “not to be recognized as working class.” “There was a refusal of recognition rather than a claim for the right to be recognized. It was a denial of the representation of their positions. The label working class when applied to women has been used to signify all that is dirty, dangerous and without value. In the women’s claims for a caring/respectable/responsible personality class was rarely directly figured but was constantly present” (Skeggs 1997, 74).

Although it is of little concern, it is also important to note that such a relationship between specific forms of work and identity could be confirmed by immigrant women’s self-identifications as entertainers, but not as prostitutes, sex workers or juicy girls, juices, drinkie girls or club girls: “Although they know that sexual service is part of the work they should/might practice, they do not identify themselves as sex workers but ‘entertainers.’ They think that they, as entertainers, are supposed to sell juices and to talk with customers, whilst sex workers, unlike positive interpellation in

feminist academia, are more like prostitutes (and juicy girls) implying vulgar and sensual women as well as the legitimacy of work (Baek 1999, 65-6).”<sup>105</sup>

The fixation of the sex trade experiences of the women and subsequent sexualized identity is not only limited but dangerous in many aspects. First, the concept of identity is not as simple as I noted earlier. Second, they had diverse work experiences including legal marriages. As Agustín (2005b) nicely notes it, “relative powerlessness (at one stage of life course) need not be permanent; poor people also enjoy multiple identities that change over life-courses composed of different stages, need, and projects” (226). Finally, in the same text, their social identification, if any, is not based on the practice of sex trade itself but based on (working) class. Class based identification and sex trade work (as one of informal works) are fundamentally indivisible. Yet it should be emphasized because the fixation of sex trade makes it difficult to imagine the process of identification. That is, most of the women I studied have shown adjustment by not speaking about their sex trade experience.

### **3. Critiques of Fatalism and an Alternative View**

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<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Baek (1999) points out that the immigrant women’s self identifications as entertainers are presented to differentiate them from Korean women who practice (professional) prostitution. But in spite of their distinction being entertainers from doing prostitution, because they do the social interpretation of entertainer, or to work in clubs, they do not want their families to know that they are entertainers (65-9).

Lastly, let me consider the deeper context of the mostly invisible strength through which the women wield their lives. One of the main reasons for the reservation of dis/identification from sex trade experience in terms of the characteristics of the women's narratives, is that the recognition of their pasts (and whole lives) is adjustment (Skeggs's term 1997) or reinhabitation of a world (Das's term 2007).

Like the subject of fetishism of sexuality, what I want to attempt to develop is very often confused with other similar and pervasive discourses such as shame, "resignation" and "fatalism" in existing literature mostly because of its seemingly passiveness and less dramatic forms. Similarly han and palja are often used for such moods in Korea. Han is a bit more difficult to translate in English. It implies deep and strong endurance or internalization of suffering and grievance and, thus, denotes passiveness and emotional feeling. Sometimes it has been used to explain the Korean woman's uniqueness in terms of unequal gender relationship symbolizing their endurance and patience.<sup>106</sup> Palja literally refers to the eight cyclical characters

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<sup>106</sup> In exploring two life histories of women who married American GIs, Chulin Yoo (1993) interprets their narratives as han in the following way:

Han is a deep feeling that rises about the unjust experiences of the people and the suppressed, amassed, and condensed experience of oppression caused by mischief or misfortune so that it forms a kind of "lump" in one's spirit... Korean have suffered numerous invasions by surrounding powerful nation so that the very existence of the Korean nation has come to understood as han; As Korean history has embodied the han of Korean people, Korean women have collective aspects in han; a history of sorrows and grudges long repressed by the shadow of a male-dominated society. (78-9)

Needless to say, the tendency of reducing Korean history into the concept of han is another Orientalism and ends up reproducing static and essentialized historiography. The "culture of han" which is considered unique to Korean women in conventional varying literature.

forming binomial designations for the year, month, day, and hour of the birth of a person. In Korean folklore, these characters are supposed to have an influence on one's fate (Yoo 1993, 73). But it is safe to say that palja is much similar to fate.

Fatalism combined with the operations of habit (simply making us used to them, dead to their assaults; Nussbaum 1998, 490) is reinforced by their image of (desexualized) grandmothers. In public sphere and academic circles, such fatalism takes many different forms. Haeil Cho in *America* (1990[1972]), a typical national-male-elitist novel, gives a depiction of the women: "I was surprised to find out that most of the girls who were engaged in that activity did not seem to suffer from any ethical guilt or sense of moral depravity. Rather, they accepted that life with willing delight (Perhaps these girls had submissively abandoned themselves to the fatalism so prevalent among the female population in this field, or among the whole nation at this time)" (23-4). I was also told by many elderly women that "I was born without any luck," "It was my palja," "I think everyone has his/her own fate. That is why I live

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However it is not true. It is essentially intertwined with the social order within every society. For example, Behar (1990) mentions a Mexican term "coraje" which refers to a very deep anger or rage. In introducing a Mexican woman named Esperanza, she mentions that Esperanza suffered from continual coraje caused by her husband's violence and unfaithfulness, which resulted in a deep welling up of rage that killed the children: "The coraje was not simply an emotional state but an illness state that forms part of Mexican women's realm of suffering and healing" (284). Farmer (1988) also introduces the similar term "move san" (in Haitian, bad blood in English) which is somatically experienced and caused by emotional distress. When it occurs in pregnant women or nursing mothers, move san causes breast milk to spoil, in which case an herbal treatment is likely to be sought. In contrast to the idea that it is only psychological or somatic, Farmer points out the social nature, considering the move san complex to be an illness caused by malignant emotion-anger born of interpersonal strife, shock, grief, chronic worry, and other affects perceived as potentially harmful. Those examples disprove the uniqueness of han in Korean society and reaffirm the social effects of individual and even somatic experiences of women.

like this” or “It seems like I was born in a wrong generations.” I introduce an elderly woman’s narrations of her life:

I didn’t make a lot of money. I don’t think I was supposed to be there... I got tips and had boyfriends (when I worked as a waitress)... What would I do when I get over there (USA)? I don’t have any education or anything. Not every couple stays together forever. I don’t get a person who’s compatible with me, fate... When I asked around they (fortunetellers) say that I have “fate of living alone.” My husband will be jobless and I should take care of him. I came to realize/believe that people have their own fate. When I was in my 40s, a fortuneteller told me that I was born with my fate to be in such a situation. I have bad fortune, so I should have married a smart man. What is the point of marrying man (who don’t understand my situation) or marry to a man like a Buddha? If I meet a Korean person, it doesn’t mean that I’ll live a good life and even if I meet an American person, it doesn’t mean that I’ll live a good life either... I don’t have any luck with husbands. Even if I have one, I have to be the one to make money. I could never be a housewife and that’s my fate. So, I don’t mistreat anyone and don’t get sick. I don’t intend to make lots of money. I just wish I can just get what the country can give me and die without pain. I’ve lived life all this time and there is definitely a fate. When I look at the people I know, all the sons live like their fathers and all the daughters live like their mothers. (Gangsun Choi; late 60s; she used to work as a waitress until 60 before she got physically weak)

As I noted, such narratives have been interpreted as fatalism. However, to “speak” does not mean that they have lived their daily lives without any initiative or struggle, and the “nuanced” tones underling the statements were much complex and hard to put in any written forms. In interpreting these statements such as fate and palja, what most scholars miss is that the narrative is not a text itself but is engendered through the relationship between a researcher and a researched<sup>107</sup> as well as the disregard or

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<sup>107</sup> As Behar (1990) points out, “the natural attitude of readers towards biography like the social science approach wrongly assumes that the life history is a direct representation of the



unawareness of “nuanced” textures of vocal statements. Especially in the case of elderly women, the dynamic process of life histories is too crudely summarized. Since many scholars have missed these contexts, they too easily identify the statement of “my life just follows fate/palja” with literal “fatalism” or reduce it into “han” which is also interpreted as fatalism. Thus in actuality, the women who mentioned the term palja went on saying that “it was my palja, but it is said that we could do anything except stealing (in difficult financial circumstances)” or “I followed my life’s fate. I was just being responsible for my life. So I don’t have any regrets and I am not lonely.” When a co-interviewer asked Gangsun Choi if she is envious of a woman having children, she replied: “I’m not envious of having children. Think about how you can’t send them to school and let them learn (due to poverty). Not having the children do what they want as a parent. I don’t want to make my children feel bad. Why should I make anyone feel that bad? My life was something that was given so I should work hard at it.” As such her narratives demonstrate just how independently she tried to wield her life.<sup>108</sup>

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informant’s life, something almost equivalent to the informant’s life. The fictions of self-representation, the ways in which a life is made in the telling and ‘an ordered past imposed by a present personality upon a disordered life.’ The text is, in fact, not the person but a version of the self-constructed by a subject to present to the anthropologist” (225-6).

<sup>108</sup> She was one of several interviewees who made statements about me. When she was told I was studying in the U.S. she said that “It is a good experience for you. If you learn, that’s how you get wisdom. Whether or not it’s good or bad, only when you learn, you can gain wisdom.” It did not literally mean that she was envious of my background and presented economic security but rather intended to pinpoint the relationship between wisdom and (institutionalized) education.

In existing feminist literature, there are few works looking into such subtle, nuanced contexts. With the delicate and complicated interaction between social violence and the subjectivity of underprivileged people which looks like seemingly passive fatalism, I found Veena Das's "poisonous knowledge," Maria Mies's "abundance of hard labor" from the subsistence perspective and Wanseo Pak's literary vocabularies of "pure vitality," "the unique liveliness" and "poverty as vocation" of the underprivileged who realized/impersonated poverty (W. Pak 1999[1981]). While Das suggests it more theoretical terms, Pak does in literary terms.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Wanseo Pak's "Stolen Poverty (1999[1981]; I made a change from the original translated title, Poverty that is Stolen)" where I borrow several terms, is not a story where the main character is a woman in the sex industry, but rather, the protagonist is the victim of violence that perpetual poverty imposes upon her. This novel is intended to criticize hypocritical, rich people who try to imitate/appropriate poverty of the poor (A male college student pretends to be poor by working as a factory worker and cohabiting with the female protagonist after his father suggests that his son experience being poor). The protagonist's family is poor to begin with and faces total bankruptcy, which leads every member of the family, except the protagonist, to commit suicide. Pak describes it this way:

How mother had detested *the unique liveliness of people who felt the claws of poverty and lived with it*, refusing to yield. Mother used to remark that she was fed up to the teeth with their scorn of society and their intensity, but she never had the audacity to question their role. Thus mother imbued her husband and sons with her scorn of such lives, and they ended up committing suicide with her. They thrust upon me the sight and smell of their poverty and ugly death... But I felt close and friendly living with poverty. Mother, father, and my brother *refused to accept*, preferring to give up their lives. I was shrouded with a keen sense of warm pleasure even as my heart was choked. *They pretended to despise poverty, but I know they were in reality scared of it.* Like a child who loves to show off, I thrust out my chest and ran headlong down the steep hill. (60-1; emphasis added)

Pak interprets this situation as "poverty becomes vocation (it is translated into volition in English version)" to the female protagonist. She nicely captures that while her family dramatically resists the violence of poverty by choosing suicide, the narrator, a female laborer at a sweatshop, lives with poverty and endures the suffering inflicted by it. She willingly accepts/embraces poverty with such reasoning. Pak is aware that we cannot interpret the action to live with poverty and to embrace the suffering from poverty by working as a laborer as simple fatalism. While the family does dramatize resistance in making a decision to commit suicide, which in fact refers to submission to poverty, the protagonist does it more positively by domesticating violence and suffering on a daily basis.

Das, in her writing of the 1947 India/Pakistan division in “The Act of Witnessing” (2007) visits the many incidents of violence that took place, concentrating on the kidnapping and raping of women, as well as the occurrence of unwanted children. Through the case of Asha (Widowed at a young age because of the Partition, she was already vulnerable in a kinship of Hindu caste ethos. Her natal family does not support her), she insightfully reveals that “if one’s way of being-with-others was brutally damaged, then the past enters the present not necessarily as traumatic memory but as poisonous knowledge- which is equally poisonous, but involves the everyday work of repair” -which can be engaged by only through a knowing by a suffering” (76).

There was the poisonous knowledge that Asha was betrayed by her senior affinal kin, as well as by her own brother, who could not undertake to sustain the long-term commitment to a destitute sister. What was equally important for her was the knowledge that she may have herself betrayed her dead husband and his dead sister by the imagination of infidelity and made a young child, her special adopted son, felt abandoned. It was not any momentary heroic gestures but the patient work of living with this new knowledge - *really knowing not just by intellect but the passions* - that made the two women’s work simply as an exemplary instance of agency seen as a product of different subject positions -perpetrator, victim, witness. (2007, 77; emphasis added)

Thus her conclusive interpretation of Asha’s life is that:

Clearly the terrible violence of the Partition signaled the death of her world, as she had known it. It also provided a new way by which she could reinhabit the world. From some perspectives her attachment to the past might be read through the imprisonment

metaphor -something she is incapable of breaking out of. From another perspective, though, the temporal depth in which she constructs her subjectivity shows how one may occupy the very signs of injury and give them a meaning not only through acts of narration but through the work of repairing relationships and giving recognition to those whom the official norms had condemned. (Ibid., 78)<sup>110</sup>

Conclusively, Das suggests that it is not the commonly understood concept of knowledge but rather (the correct, more persuasive) knowledge of how women have applied their violent experiences to their current daily lives. She further reminds us that the poisonous knowledge in their daily lives is a much more relevant question.

Let me further consider it with a literary work titled *Baby* (1996) by a Korean novelist Ina Yun. The novel is based on the writer's observation in her hometown, Songtan during 1987-92.<sup>111</sup> She presents an elderly woman named Geumsun Kim. Unlike other feminist fictions on camptowns where most protagonists are young and employed, the protagonist in the novel is an elderly woman (expectedly the young protagonists are described as assertive agents identifying themselves as sex workers).

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<sup>110</sup> As these quotations have shown, Das's poisonous knowledge is formed on the basis of two different concepts: Wittgenstein's sense of there being no outside and the image of turning back to inhabit the same space now marked as a space of destruction, in which we must live again and Nussbaum's understanding of suffering: "There is a kind of knowing that works by suffering because suffering is the appropriate acknowledgement of the way human life... To grasp either a love or a tragedy by intellect is not sufficient for having real human knowledge of it" (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, quoted in Das 2007, 75). Nussbaum's understanding of suffering is intended to question the limitation of intellectual reason for complex self-awareness and later she revisits the cataleptic impression in ancient stoic philosophy (emotional painful experience) as a key in understanding love (love is not a structure in the heart waiting to be discovered; it is embodied in, made up out of, experiences; Nussbaum 1988). While Nussbaum takes the question of suffering through a philosophical concept in terms of knowledge, Das takes it focusing on the relationship of time to subjectivity. There is a missing point that I think it should be added from political point of view: the question of structure and agent, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

<sup>111</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, August 6, 1996; *Segye Ilbo*, August 20, 1996.

That is, this novel well captures the fact that “women spoke of their experiences by anchoring their discourse to the genres of mourning and lamentation that already assigned a place to them in the cultural work of mourning, but they spoke of voice and pain within these genres as well as outside them” (Das 2007, 59). She recalls her whole life and illustrates the process of how she perceives her past including the sex trade, the course of her life, and a patriarchal society where American men are valued but women involved with them were degraded. The protagonist, Geumsun, was born under Japanese colonialism. She left her home to work as a babysitter; while working at the house, she gets raped by a GI (the owner forced Geumsun instead of her daughter). She ends up engaging in relationships with GIs and used to live with a Korean man, Myeonggeun, who abused her. She worked as a waitress in a club in the final scene. The following quote is from that scene:

Only as time passed did she realize and look within herself to find that the reason she did not resist her surroundings was because she wanted to seek revenge on her parents. And the reason that she had not even uttered his name, Myeonggeun (Korean man she was engaged) was because she desired to hide it, didn't want to acknowledge... No, she didn't even want to think about him. Hitting her forehead against the wall at Geoje Island was a form of revenge against Daddy (GI who would leave her). Hurting oneself, treating oneself worse than an insect, these were ways to hurt another person (191); Myeonggeun played yet another role in the relationship between Daddy and I. If she was to hurt herself in an effort to hold onto the one she loved, then Myeonggeun was guilty of torturing the person he loved. Those two branches shared the same root. It was a nervousness that came from questions such as what if the person you are in love in no longer loves you back? If they leave? Her whole life she had experienced these feelings of anxiety, as different GIs came and went. Who would have known that she

would finally come to terms with herself after living 27 years in the midst of angst? ‘I would have never imagined that the Myeonggeun that she met in my memories 27 years later would think of her as another Baby, Mink, Jeanie, little Susie, or Susie (nicknames). Yes. It was only then that I was really able to look at life. I made peace with life.’ (193)

Not surprisingly, a male critic of the book comments that it is not class, subjective consciousness or help from other people, but the passing of time and natural biological aging that makes the narrator reconcile with her life (1996, 216). In actuality, the writer intends to situate the issue of “class consciousness” as a form of resistance given these contexts: Geumsun, who never knew the Korean alphabet before, either has deep seeded feelings of innate subjectivity, which are far from the typical prostitute’s persona, or realizes the unfairness of the fact that her suffering is not a problem for the individual, but actually a problem for society as a whole.<sup>112</sup>

The reason why there is less urgency or difficulty of life in *Baby*, in addition to the difference of genre, novel versus autobiography, is the active role of time which I noted earlier. In addition, the reason why Geumsun was able to reconcile with her harsh life is not only passive waiting or biological aging, but the countless struggles and subsequent knowledge from suffering including betrayal, conflict, violence or desperation. The hard earned strengths and wisdoms women gained from their

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<sup>112</sup> Although the women’s own subjectivity and self-awareness are well described, it is also notable that the process and tenor are a bit elitist. Trying to explain the nature of social violence and the price of hard labor by using statements such as “You think you know what war is? You think I do this because I enjoy it?” (1996, 172) is, on the one hand quite dramatic, but on the other hand very defensive.

tumultuous lives are presented in those narratives: For instance, when I asked a woman about her experience running a club in a camptown toward her late years, she replied, “‘Of course!’ it is hard, but you just get through them. Even if I got (things) stolen, I got through with it by having (things) stolen.” In emphasizing the difference between work in a Korean club versus work in a camptown club, one interviewee stated that “the dirtiest place is a Korean club, ‘but only when you take all that dirtiness is when money comes from it.’” It is in such a deeper context that the women did not show any interest in being recognized as “respectable women,” which was noticeable to American military brides who comparatively enjoyed stable lives in Yuh’s work (2002). That is, it was due to such patient and invisible transformation/strength on a daily basis that neither the strategy of disidentification (not being recognized as a sex worker) nor the strategy of becoming respectable women was appreciable.

Additionally and at slight different level of analysis, I introduce a young woman’s life history in order to show the dynamic process of women’s lives (It could serve to another way to disprove fatalism as well). Hiyeong Kang (31) was one of the interviewees in a documentary film. In the film, she pointed out the prevalence of Korean customers’ violent tendencies toward women. When asked why she gave testimony on film, she answered that she wanted to help others since there wasn’t

anyone there when she needed help. Kang left home because she felt her middle class parents were too conservative and old fashioned. She worked in Korean clubs and came to the camptowns at the age of 17. At the camptown, the club owner gave her 100 dollars and told her to buy showering products: "100 dollars was a big amount of money back then. I was really thankful about it. I was thankful because she trusted me. I worked to pay off my debt even though the owner didn't really give me that much monthly pay." When she became of age, she was trafficked by the club owner: The club owner asked if she could borrow money for two days and that she would pay it back since her son's business was about to go bankrupt. That is how they ended up at the job agency. There was a man willing to pay \$15,000 on the spot for her. She took the job and gave the money to the club owner. Since the work environment at the brothel was extremely horrible, she felt that she could not even stay for a day (women had to go to the public bath altogether and had to stay at a small room together; with a small amount of money, they would do everything the customers wanted including sexual service; after her time there, she developed a allergy to men's colognes). Yet, she couldn't help spending two years there and could not contact the club owner afterwards. One day all the girls were taken to the police station because of one of the girl's parents called the police. The procedure was that a woman could be released if her identity was proven by someone. She contacted the club owner and told her that



she'd forgive her of her debt if she would just come to the police station and confirm her identity. The club owner turned down the request. Her parents finally came to the police station. She recalled that it made a "huge scar in both her parent's hearts." She did not go back home but kept working in other clubs. A few years ago, working at the club, she married a Turkish bartender. Since her husband wanted her to stop working in a club, she stopped working and now takes care of her baby. She said that she and the club owner are enemies after what happened.

I didn't know anything back then. I hated her so much that I wanted to kill her. I hate her now too, but I don't want to do that any more because I have my own child. I'm afraid that all the hatred will give bad aura to my child. Because all the bad stuff that happened to me became goodness to me. I have learned a lot, a lot because of it. But I really will not forget the owner for the rest of my life. After what happened, my parents and I have such bad relationship.

When I asked about the current relationship between her and her parents, she replied that her parents stopped talking to her because she married a man from a third world country. Based on her experience, she proposed a research topic on immigrant men: "There are serious myths about immigrant men who marry to Korean women. It is said that they get married to escape their illegal status and exploit Korean women. For example, I watched a program where a man looking like Chinese got caught. There were approximately 300-400 dollars in his wallet, but the Korean guy catching the Chinese asked why he had so much dollars. If he is an American, the Korean would

never ask like that. That is not a lot of money; even my husband had 700-800 dollars in his wallet. It is just because the guy was from a third world country.” What the club owner did to her was a terrible incident, enough for her to say she wanted to kill the club owner. Yet she has dealt with it and managed her emotions in her own way (She kept visiting the club owner to ask to pay the money back until recently). In criticizing the transformation of protector into perpetrator leading to a double victimization of the victims, Das (1994) argues that “to the victim, life may be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards, and a discourse on suffering is worth having only if it helps the victim to live forwards.” Her critiques on double victimization and the direction of discourse on suffering are unquestionable. Yet in practice, even to the victims, life is understood “forwards.”

#### **4. Conclusion**

Unlike two powerful discourses, nation and sexuality in the nationalist public sphere and fetishism in sexuality and consequent sexualized identity in hegemonic feminist discourse, women’s narratives were centered on work, adjustment and current situations. Based on the women’s life histories and narratives, my findings are not different from those of existing literature on the contexts of the sex trade industry. Such contexts include the background of entry into the sex industry, historical settings

like the Korean War, economic hardship and personal disillusionment, and the fact that the women have experienced various informal jobs through their whole lives.

But this chapter began with a central finding during my fieldwork research: Most informants neither identified themselves as sex workers, nor did they deny that they are not sex workers even when they clearly spoke about knowledge of the sex trade. Against fatalism or *han*, I have suggested main reasons for their reticence through various forms of dis/identification from social class, sex trade as a form of work and reinhabitation of a world throughout their entire lives: Sex trade is work in that it is on the continuum of other informal and temporary jobs. It, in often cases, includes legal marriage to GIs; their dis/identification is not grounded on sex trade itself but, rather, class and the form of work; they exert various forms of identities ranging from identification, dissimulation to disidentification from social positions. Thus the narratives of their past and the experiences of the sex trade is adjustment rather than “total denial” or “shame” (by not speaking about the experience of sex trade). This includes subtle, qualitative transformation such as “poisonous knowledge” (Das 2007), “abundance from hard labor” from the subsistence perspective (Mies 1999) and “pure vitality from poverty” (W. Pak 1999).

## **Chapter 5: Victimization, Silence and Everyday Subversions**

### **1. Contexts of Victimization**

Women involved in the sex trade in the camptowns have been characterized as passive victims who have been lured and tricked into sex work by structural factors such as gendered poverty, patriarchy in host societies and the U.S. military imperialism. Due to such hegemonic discourses and the intricacy of the sex work debate, the question of agency of the Korean women is under-theorized. In the nationalist public sphere, the women are mobilized and imagined as a national body to confront the material power of the U.S. as well as being considered a pitiful existence. Han, fatalism and the simultaneous objectification of pity and disdain are taken within a nationalist perspective. Meanwhile, feminist scholarship presents the women's agency through either an assertive through limited form of resistance such as collective actions and visible demonstrations against sexual violence or reflective ones through the concept of class and/or feminist consciousness. Nationalist narratives and feminist rhetoric have had contrasting points of view on the militarized prostitution in terms of their starting points, assumptions and main claims. Yet as I have demonstrated in chapter 3, they have also shared some commonality in their national consciousness and class biased understanding of the women. Consequently, the shared threads of the documentation of victimization and the presumed rhetorical

appeal to “a sense of common humanity” create a spectacle of the other’s suffering.

The patriarchal moral ideology has never been fully challenged even in feminist scholarship. The recent new paradigm of “(desexualized) poor grandmother” once again overshadows the actual process of the women’s own lives and consciousness.

As the most recent example, I consider the documentary film *And Thereafter 2* (2006) directed by Hosup Lee. His two documentary films *And Thereafter 1* (2003) and 2 were made in the U.S. The second film has not been distributed yet. In the beginning of *And Thereafter 2* where a woman’s life (former sex worker who immigrated to the U.S) is narrated, the director presents his inquiries and does not hesitate to clarify a nationalist position of the film narrating two dramatic incidents in Korea: “In 1986, my college friend Sejin cried ‘Yankee Go Home!’ and then self-immolated. In 1992 Kumi Yun, a GI bargirl in Korea, was brutally murdered by Private Kenneth Markle. As anti-Americanism spread throughout Korea, I questioned why 2,000 Korean women got married to U.S. soldiers every year. I wondered about their lives afterward.” In contrast to his first documentary film with no director’s intervention or questioning, the second film makes his arguments and reveals his internal conflicts by actively presenting his questions and statements on the screen so that the audience could read the dialogue between the interviewee and the director as well as the director’s intention in the process of filming. The only interviewee was

married to a GI in Korea and immigrated to the U.S.; she worked at a massage parlor for some time shortly thereafter. Her husband died a few years ago and she now lives on her late husband's pension; sometimes she goes to the casinos to gamble for fun.

The following scene was in the first part of the film.

Director: Are you happy?

Woman: Of course, I am happy.

(Director presents a question mark on screen.)

Director: Are you really happy?

Woman: Why do you keep asking it? You think I cannot be happy because I am a former western whore?

(On screen: Why did I conclude (presume) that she was unhappy? I'd lost my sense of direction.)

Director: Why did you marry a U.S. soldier?

Woman: Of course I wanted to come to America.

Director: Why did you want to come to America?

Woman: Because I didn't like Korea? Just because. I still don't meet any Koreans here. Those fuckers think I am an animal because I was a western whore.

Director: How did you meet your husband?

Woman: What do you mean? I met him in the fuck business.

Director: I mean... Don't you need love to get married?

Woman: Love? I don't know fucking shit about that. How is it love when we couldn't communicate? Anyway what is love?

(Director: Silence)

The director's questions, "Are you happy?" "Why did you marry a U.S. soldier?"

"Don't you need love to get married?" presume fixed assumptions that women

married to American GIs are or must always be unhappy. It presumes as well that

their marriage must be based on materialism and the women's eagerness to immigrate

to the U.S. rather than true love, which is difficult to define and prove and more than

anything else hard to divide clearly in any social relations. He does not give persuasive reasons or any explanations as to why she is pitiful, but he does not change her pitiful image throughout the film. Furthermore, the director confesses his perplexity by asking “Why did I conclude she must be unhappy?” Indeed we can sense how deeply uncomfortable she was with the question “Are you happy?” by her prompt retort, “You think I cannot be happy because I am a former western whore?” In the film, she addresses many hardships whilst working in the sex industry, i.e. her own family’s betrayal, family members’ disregard to their international marriage, the hard relationship between herself and her American in-laws, and the language problems in the U.S. Yet in principle, that does not mean that she is or must always be unhappy. For example, because she did not have any schooling in the past she felt very proud of learning enough English, on her own, to manage the bills. More than anything else, it is impossible to prove whether she is happy or not as is the concept of love itself (However it was often employed during the counseling session of the NGOs).

Identifying others as unchangeable victims through confession, testimony, and autobiography is often grounded in the method of (classed and individualized) self reflexivity (Skeggs 2004) which often privileges the interlocutor’s location and moral authority. Intentional enlightenment with a patronizing tenor is also a part in building

the interlocutor's moral authority. Towards the end of the film the director confesses his internal conflict about filming "a pitiful woman." During filming, the interviewee wanted to stop because it was too hard, painful to recall the past. He puts his response and self-reflection on the screen: "After that I did not contact ajumma (Mrs.) and lost myself in drink. Every night a faceless man came to me. I wanted to free but he kept asking why are you making a documentary? Why did you videotape ajumma? Through ajumma... I wanted to... the alienated people... Be honest! You can tell me truth! Aren't you using this pitiful woman for your own success? NO! (bigger font with dramatic background music)... Yes (smaller font)." There is another similar moment to address. In the scene regarding the Korean War, she recalled a friendly impression of the U.S. army: "The U.S. army came, I was so scared at first. I have never seen a westerner before. But they are giving us all these strange things, gum, chocolate milk, soap. At first, I'd run away when I saw the GIs. But they gave us goods so we hung around them. I think U.S. soldiers are the best since then. Well, Americans fought for our country... Why do young Koreans hate America?" After the scene, the director presents, "I didn't want to influence ajumma, so I limited my opinions. But I wanted to explain to ajumma why Koreans like her came to hate



America.”<sup>113</sup> Since a nationalist position is unquestionable and is a pre-given justifiable argument for the director, he feels that she should be enlightened about it.

Such a self-critical, reflexive strategy accompanied by the subjects’ visibility and moral superiority, is often employed in feminist academia as well. N. Lee (2006) in her dissertation research on militarized prostitution in Korea discusses the power differentials between the researcher and the researched. She also questions the women’s victimization and argues for women’s agency: “How dare I understand the detailed tissues of the prostitutes’ daily lives woven through violence, hatred, love, joy, small victories, and negotiations? How dare I/eye analyze their experiences constituted by presumably ambivalent, illogical, and unreadable historicity? (3-4); I did not want to undertake a study of different peoples, institutions, and cultures for the sake of ‘our’ desire to understand ‘them’ better, nor did I want to homogenize them into a singular category of sympathetic victims of imperial militaristic patriarchy” (226). Lee goes on to confess that she thus decided to give up the project of making the experience of others visible due to the reasons aforementioned and traced historical genealogy of militarized prostitution based on a macro level analysis.

Social agents including academics are well aware of what kind of knowledge and practice is “familiar” and socially preferred. Knowledge or knowledge production

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<sup>113</sup> Throughout the film, she reveals both hateful and friendly recognition in regards to the U.S. army which are based on her specific experiences, emotions, and recognitions.

itself is intertwined with a writer/agent's own interests, social position, arguments, and identification (Alarcón 1990). N. Lee's (2006) "pervasive" confession in feminist writings is nothing more than an example of the impotence of theory production on the sex trade and the foreclosure of the possibilities of dis/identification of the women (Fernandes 2003). As many writers have argued, the author's self-reflexivity does not change reality and guilt is just another name for the impotence of defensiveness and destruction of communication. It becomes a device to protect unawareness, ignorance and the continuation of the status quo. By presupposing and employing self-identification with the author's own "pre-fixed," privileged identity, the confession ends up naturalizing the other's underprivileged identity but preserving the author's moral privilege. Further, the self-reflexivity of different social positions is fundamentally linked to the writers' methodologies. Due to the intertwined features of methodological and ideological underpinning we have seen (chapter 4), even when feminist scholars argue for woman's resistance, they do not fully show "how" the women are not victims, but instead are content to the "nominal" claims of the women's agency that they are not passive victims or are limited to open, familiar forms of resistance. Exemplifying cases of women's demonstrations against U.S military authorities, N. Lee (2006) aforementioned makes a convenient conclusion

that the women in 1950-60s wielded relative autonomy but in 1970s due to harsh control of the government they lose autonomy and hope (139-46).

It is also crucial to consider the complex and practical complications of the victimization strategy. A documentary film supported by MSP, *Me and the Owl* (2003) presents an elderly woman's life history, showing her daily life around the U.S. camptown with some testimonies from women working in gijichon. The film became respected in Korea because it was different from the other demagogic nationalist films which focused on U.S. imperialism and violence against women.<sup>114</sup> *Me and the Owl* presents one woman's life and reveals a therapeutic drawing process for Korean people's emotions. From mid March to early April of 2007 the film was screened in U.S. (at several universities, annual meeting of Asian Studies of Association, and some Korean and American churches). Unlike the relatively favorable responses in Korea, the groups of the screening were confronted with the American audience's unexpected, unfavorable responses throughout the screening (with some exceptions). A filmmaker who attended the screening put the response as follows:<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> For example, a newspaper article reads: "*Me and the Owl* is a film where viewers' subjective stance and liberal imagination are to value instead of simply reporting, divulging (violence against women) with a feminist perspective on the basis of political and sociological context surrounding camptowns." *Minjung Media, Chamsesang (Righteous Society)*, October 23, 2003; [http://www.newscham.net/news/view.php?board=media\\_story&nid=2291](http://www.newscham.net/news/view.php?board=media_story&nid=2291)

<sup>115</sup> Interview, June 2007.

I realized that... they just look at it as a (political) issue rather than a film (as a different genre). So I began to worry about my film, how I can communicate with world audience who are not familiar with a Korean society and don't have any shared heartstrings. It just didn't work on the American audience. They don't understand the feeling. For us (Koreans), when someone says military base camptowns, we feel something. Even my (younger) generation, we have something like that. So when we show a different aspect in the film, they like it because it's something new. They say that the documentary is weird. It's so boring and no subtitles and no American soldiers. There were lots of questions about the documentary and people liked (protagonist) Insun's character and the job that MSP does. They were also saying why he (director) didn't make this movie a little more political rather than melancholic so that he can make a bigger deal out of this situation. I answered that if we wanted to make this into a political issue, I (we or filmmakers) would've made pamphlets and wrote books about it. I believe that films are different. The reason we chose to film is because we wanted to move people's minds, not to talk about politics.

She differentiated film from politics and expressed her concern for communicating with international audiences. In actuality, Gyeongtae Pak, director of the film in an essay (2003) pinpointed the problems of the politics of representation by differentiating (simple) testimony and revelation. He wanted to visualize/reveal the women's lives rather than enforce ideas to the audience such as gendered suffering or nationalism through formalized prepared arguments.<sup>116</sup> This was a quite different attempt from conventional visual activist traditions. However, due to the lack of an alternative form of (re)presentation and the immutability of the image itself, it tends to reinforce the sentimentalism of the suffering and pain against the director's wishes.

After the U.S. screening, the MSP decided to make another "educational film" where

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<sup>116</sup> "It seems that testimony is putting the content or information that is needed right away into practicality, but 'revelation' is a repetitive process of showing (the marginalized social groups) and making unfamiliar" (G. Pak 2003).

the narratives of immigrant women regarding their disadvantaged situations and hardships are mainly presented in interval of 30 minutes. The presumption of the production was to better communicate with the (international) audience. The premise of the decision was that it would be more permissible and socially communicable for immigrant women to be represented as victims with a more simplified formality such as women's narratives.

By courtesy of the MSP, I was given the opportunity to watch the film *Women Building a House on the Road* in advance which has not been released yet. It presents several Russian women's testimony and narratives of their lives in Korea as immigrants. There is much more than a simple visualization of women's oppression and difficulties in terms of intersectional, complex forms of oppression and women's agency in the film. Social agents have often witnessed the actual discrepancy between prejudiced knowledge of victimization and what they have witnessed in reality. For instance, Jeongsu Kim, filmmaker and photographer who was making a film on immigrant women, addressed the internal conflict about the factual discrepancy between biased knowledge and what she had witnessed in filming her subjects.<sup>117</sup>

To a filmmaker, my main protagonist should be a nice person as Insun (protagonist in *Me and the Owl*). How can I film if I hate the character of protagonist? Although she gets fresh and energetic spirit but she has identity of victim inflicted by previous harms. But most people I documented are either deceitful or try to take advantage of

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<sup>117</sup> Interview, June 2007.

American GIs. I wanted a kind of “sincerity (jinjeongseong)” of Korean women in the sex trade, but the women I met... (Laugh)

She addressed the essentialized “sincerity” of elderly Korean women in order to justify the sex trade and differentiate between young immigrant women and elderly Korean women. On a previous interview with her, she specified the “sincerity” of Korean women. For instance, she described the will to help their own families and the pride that they did something for their family even though they lived difficult lives.<sup>118</sup>

The last point I want to add is that the victimization strategy has been operated and reinforced within an institutional setting. According to the reformed law of 2004, the women in the sex trade are no longer subjects of punishment. They also receive assistance and counseling “only when they could prove that they are victims of sex trade” (J. Kim 2007). Thus, for instance, clients of the NGOs should, in the first place, be categorized as victims of the sex trade if they want to get any support/protection from the NGOs. Very often and necessarily, the questions of whether the clients were forced to participate in the sex trade and whether sexual violence was inflicted on them have come up first and foremost. Thus, in the process, the tension between enforced and naturalized identification of victims and women’s resistances often emerged. As I will illustrate throughout this chapter, many of the women I studied

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<sup>118</sup> The word “deceitful” in the quote may be strong and left problematic. The intention behind the term was to describe how women actively maneuvered their strategies in order to get material and psychological security from their customers, usually the GIs (Askew 1999, Baek 1999, Cheng 2002, Yea 2005).

never wanted to sacrifice their self-esteem in favor of their urgent and practical interests provided by NGOs and other social agents. The problem of victimization is beyond the question of whether the representation is limited or distorted. Rather it is a political process which encompasses interlocutors' interests, desires, moral privilege, and interlocutors' habitual submission to predominant knowledge frameworks on the sex trade.

## **2. (Enforced) Recognition and To Be Silent**

In feminist academia and activism, the question of resistance and agency of women (in the sex trade) has been discussed through such terms as “negotiation,” “empowerment,” “choice,” “speech -breaking silence-,” “visibility or being recognized,” “feminist or/and class consciousness” and “open forms of resistance” like protest against discriminations and establishment of women’s own self-help organizations. For instance, Collective for Sexuality Minority Culture Pinks<sup>119</sup> made a documentary titled *Mamasan: Remember Me This Way* (2004) which presented an Amerasian elderly woman working as a mamasan in a camptown club. This job caught the interest of the organization because they were placed in a contradictory

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<sup>119</sup> This organization is a small scale Korean feminist one which consists of several feminists in their 20s and their interests are in solidarity for anti-sex trade, transgender, sexuality of teenagers, and feminist cultural activism.

situation as both pimp/exploiter to immigrant women and as victims of former sex work. Their interpretations of the mamasan regarding agency is focused on a “negotiation with the world” which presumes women’s active struggles and the power of management of their lives.<sup>120</sup> They were also conscious of the refutation upon the concept of negotiation:

Even though there are few choices for the women, they choose to work as mamasan. Their choice might be false agency. Some people could say that their choice is not real, but false agency since they are already constrained in a setting without other various choices from the beginning. Yet from the point of view of the individual, it presents lots of negotiations. Some people end up selling flowers (to GIs) or just live in a miserable situation, but they choose and work. (Interview with two members of the organization, August 2006)

Their understanding of agency of mamasan is unarguable but the debate still revolves around the division between structure and agent, and “(the myth of) an autonomous self.” They never question the division between victimhood and agency or power and resistance.

I consider the act of speech, a critical and “too naturalized” form of resistance in feminist academia and activism. In addition to physical destruction, violence includes the silencing of traumatized and dislocated/underprivileged social groups. Thus, in

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<sup>120</sup> “Although sex trade is just totalized (into only one form of) sex trade, it has too different (diverse stratifications) though. This city, that city, this club, that club, even depending on province. Power, they are placed in powerless in the workplace, but they do negotiations. The extents and difference of (the extent of negotiation of the negotiation power) depend on the difference of the mechanism. What we look at is how they make the negotiation power in the constricted circumstances” (Interview with two members of the organization, August 2006).



many cases, breaking the silence or giving voice to the voiceless is considered a liberatory practice. However, not only does the speech of the less privileged social groups not “necessarily” result in liberating effects for the (re)presented, but also can erase power differentials in play (Glenn 2004, xix). This is because, as Das insightfully puts it, “the act of speech is not identical to voice” (2007).

Yeonja Kim’s<sup>121</sup> autobiographical essay titled *A Big Sister in America Town Screams even until 5 Minutes before She Dies* (2005) has demonstrated how unmatched her actual speech and representation/interpretation was in many instances. In addition to her chronological histories, Kim in the autobiography presented many instances of discrepancies between what she wanted to speak and what were represented by interlocutors in reality. After she gave a lecture in an international conference held in Japan, Korean mass media reported that “Yeonja Kim raped by GI... testified her suffering.” When one of her friends heard of these reports, she asked Kim, “Had you even been raped?”(269) She wrote what she felt in response to the question, “I testified the suffering inflicted by GIs, but never told I was raped... But there was nothing that I could be done. The facts and the truth weren’t correctly communicated... It’s the price that has to be paid for having the spotlight in this

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<sup>121</sup> Kim is a comparatively popular activist and used to work in camptowns. She was the first woman who made the issue public since mid 1990s, and had worked with several scholars and novelists such as Katharine Moon, Margo Okazawa-Rey and Ilsun An. Kim appears as the main narrator in the documentary film *Camp Arirang* (1995) and, also, one of interviewees in another documentary film *The Women Outside* (1995).

society or the media.” At another lecture held in the U.S., she talked about her experiences with another presenter who mainly examined the unbearable situations of women in the sex trade and of Amerasians. She goes on to say that “even though what the other presenter was talking is not false, I was uncomfortable (with the overemphasis on hardship of sex trade and exploitation)” (271). She even experienced an outright misinterpretation. At another lecture held in the U.S., when someone asked her, “What brought you here?” she replied that it was due to her mother’s prayers and her religion (Christianity). However, it came to be presented by the interpreter that “it was because Yeonja Kim was starved.” She reflected on the instance, “even though I wanted to tell my hope of lives which made me endure (the hopeless life)... and how I struggled to survive, the host organization wanted me to only tell the causes of my suffering to serve GIs and suicidal experiences” (273).<sup>122</sup>

Even though the voices of underprivileged people are heard, in often cases, they are subject to voyeurism -a mere spectacle to be considered as evidence of the oppression of lower class women. This discrepancy, as Kim depicts correctly, demonstrates that by overemphasizing sexual violence and suffering against women even progressive feminists and activists are complicit with the reproduction of the image of powerless and pitiful victimhood. They, thus, create an ironic situation where women themselves

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<sup>122</sup> M. Kim 2007, 16-7.

feel uncomfortable testifying. Following Yeonja Kim's expressions (2005), the facts and truths are distorted or misrepresented because audiences hear what they want to hear, and consequently the woman's desires and actual facts are never fully understood. When the socially forbidden or silenced issue eventually becomes a public discourse, they tend to be quickly co-opted by the pre-existing discourses and selectively manipulated. This eventually serves to naturalize and reproduce the oppression of the silenced (M. Kim 2005a).

During my field research, I witnessed another form of reflexive resistance (and interpretation) regarding the relationship between the women and "nation-state." Some staff members of NGOs argued for the women's contribution to a national economy claiming the women in the sex trade were "patriots" for earning foreign currency and "were sacrificed for the country." This logic has often been employed to countervail women's low self-esteem and presumed shame. The discourses of "(U.S.) Troops and (Korean) State were Big Pimps," "Repay the Debts to Them (through the common house and legal measurements)" and "Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade near Bases"<sup>123</sup> have been presented in Korean and the U.S.

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<sup>123</sup> *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, January 25, 2008; *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, January 29, 2008; *The New York Times*, January 7, 2009 respectively. The main claim of the three articles as the titles have shown is to pinpoint the role and responsibility of the Korean and U.S. Military authorities. It seems that social agents have in mind the establishment of the special law for the women and compensation of a state level like the issue of comfort women in the 1990s. For example, the second article pinpoints the division between forced comfort women and volunteered *gijichon* women. It further reads that the first steps for a nation and community to repay some debts to the women are to make public that the lives of the women were not made

public sphere. It is true that the women were mobilized as “dollar-earning patriots” to promote tourist business in camptowns by the Korean government especially in the 1970s (Y. Kim 2005). However the reduction of women’s sex trade to the contribution to the national economy is too simplistic. Several women sarcastically commented on the public sentiment that: “It’s pointless however they told how smart we (women in the sex trade) are. There is nothing to brag about. What usefulness to brag about? If we did not earn dollars, other could have done that. Isn’t it?”; “We’re different from the (Japanese) comfort women. I don’t have friends even when I was young like nowadays and all of us here are like that too. We have lived this way because we like it (life in camptowns) and we didn’t have any hardship in life when we were young. We had hard time only when we are older. I followed my life’s fate. I was just being responsible for my life. I’m not lonely. I don’t have any regret. I just want to die peacefully after solving real estate problem and passing on to my nephews (she bought a house in other province long time ago, but she could not sell it since it was in the development limitation of the government).” The expression of “brag about” in the first quote was intended to question the much used statement by social agents that they did not need to feel any shame because they made contributions to a national economy and were mobilized by national policies. Also the difference

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by individual choices, to legislate a law to compensate and to acknowledge them as historical victims.

between comfort women and women in the camptowns was made to question how their lives were misread as compulsory and victimized images. I did neither bring up nor mention the question of political victim. It was they who brought up the subject first. They clarified their feelings and positions before/during our formal/informal interviews. It seemed that because it was a “repetitive” theme they had heard from relevant social agents, they had their own stance on it. They were cautious about such a resilient discourse of political victims. In this context, the patriot discourse and subsequent political victim is nothing but another feminists’ discursive, reflexive appropriation of the women.

The problem of the act of speech lies not only in public, feminist appropriations of the speech but also in the fact that many women have not employed such open and dramatic forms of resistance. I witnessed some tension between NGOs and women. While some women wanted to shun the public and keep social distance to keep their lives from being penetrated, SSC tried to gain public interest to proceed with a fund raising campaign for a common house for the women named “The Campaign of Happiness of One Pyeong (unit of land in Korean)” and a signature-seeking campaign for governmental support. This project was intended to support women who might/cannot manage the rents in this town rising beyond their means because of the

relocation of the U.S. military bases in Pyeongtaek-si.<sup>124</sup> In fact, much of the popular media had contacted two NGOs with which I was involved. It seemed that the issue of the sex trade gained overwhelming public recognition since the effect of the special law in Korea in 2004. Some women simply refused to do interviews including mine. One of the informants in her late 60s, who participated in giving testimony for the SSC, very carefully made a point as to why she hesitated to be interviewed. She began her narratives with her surprise at the television broadcast where women who visited the SSC appeared although she did not appear in the program and was not interviewed (Most women were unidentified except for a woman who wanted to look for her adopted son in the program). The main reason for her hesitation regarding the interview was that she had an elder sister who had a son, a daughter-in-law, and grandchildren.

As long as I have visited here, that is not to say that I will be secured. Internet gets updated constantly. (It would be commonsense that) We need to say something in order to get assisted, you know the feeling. That is why I did not come up. It is to get help and put it up on the internet. It is not something that can be done alone. You need to give help and (then) receive help. How humiliating it is to go public when I might die sooner or later. So what I am saying is that my sister's grandson and son and daughter -in-law might watch it. They know what the world is about since they are all grown up enough to know this kind of businesses. That was why I was surprised because we don't know how things go on. People just take photos, you know? (Co-interviewer: These pictures usually do not leak out to the outside world...) Even though you are saying that the pictures will not be released to the public, how can we be so sure about it? We do not know. It will not be assured that it

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<sup>124</sup> <http://www.hessal.org>

will be released from books or newspaper articles. That is why I stop visiting here. Why do I bring disgrace on my sister's name? You need to think though, you just need to clean up the dirt if you made the dirt in the first place, but it is more than to tarnish my sister's reputation. (Co-interviewer: Some people might not be ashamed about their past these days.) This is just "our" thought... They are still young. The nephew's wife is like this, the aunt feels humiliated as well. You are able to observe the person more carefully. For example, suppose they watched the TV and they look at me, then they will start to look at me in a different perspective, don't you think so? That's right, there is such thing as that. But as I will die anyway, why I should face like this? I did neither make earn money nor make others envious of me like others, or it isn't this or that. That definitely brings disgrace on our family. What could nephew's wife think of? I am saying that if something does not happen his/her own, he or she will not understand the situation. So when the program was aired, I immediately switched the channel.

The elderly woman worked as a waitress in the clubs until she was 60 years old. The words "humiliation" and "disgrace" might be interpreted as evidence of her internalization of shame. Yet the context is much deeper than that. Because she was well aware of the "difficulties (impossibility) of getting understanding from others," as well as the social stigma around the job and the sex trade in the camptowns, she made an effort not to have any information reach her family members except her sister. Many people including volunteer workers and staff workers from two NGOs interpreted her hiding from the public as "low self-esteem." However, the women kept social distance not only because they had family and social ties to think of, but also "to withdraw their voices to protect their current life" from public judgment. In contrast to conventional readings of silence and social distance, there is voluntary silence. The specific forms of social distance they wanted to keep varied. For instance,

one of the services SSC provided was to invite outsiders and ask them to give a short lecture to the women to boost their self-esteem and to gain a public interest to the housing issue. Thus some women did not visit the SSC especially when the mass media and others were supposed to visit. When the SSC tried to obtain their personal information, some exhibited noncompliance when filling out personal information on a questionnaire.

Social distance was kept in the interview process as well. They kept distance because they knew that their life histories could turn into the disposable commodity of information and “practical uselessness of interview with social agents.” They said “Who likes talking about their past? I don’t want to speak at all actually. Although I speak now, you know, there would be nothing changed at all.”<sup>125</sup> In feminist ethnography, the power relations between a privileged researcher and the less privileged researched are always assumed and are often questioned (Wolf 1996). However, this depends on differences of sex or age, and even individual personality of the researcher and researched influences the process. Except for co-interviews with another researcher and staff members from NGOs, I did not conduct strictly formal

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<sup>125</sup> One elderly woman complained that the broadcast *We Want to Know the Truth* (2006) did not focus on practical problems such as housing: “If they have really interest in our problems, they should try to solve it. They don’t take it seriously saying that it is us that should solve it individually.” She had expectations of the program since her house was in poor condition. She wanted practical support from the television broadcast and the project of SSC. After airing the segment, one of her nephews called her to say that they recognized her even though she did not show her face with the figure from behind. She addressed that she was very distressed with it.



and structured interviews which in turn allowed the interviewees to have more discretion in deciding the contents of our interviews. This was not because I intended to create a more equal interview relationship with them, but because of my relatively reserved personality. In many cases, the contents and threads of interview depended on the interviewee's own personality rather than the assumed power difference between researcher and the researched.<sup>126</sup> Some of them volunteered information they wanted to convey while others controlled what answers they gave and to what extent.

Aebyeong Lee, who passed away in 2008, has been described in several books on militarized prostitution as a victim of oppression and exploitation. There were rumors of her past that were difficult to prove. She worked as a freelance worker even in her later years. While the other interviewees in the same village perceived her as picky and independent, staff members described her as lonely and obsessed with her feminine appearance compared to a normal grandmother's appearance. She did not want to be referred to as a grandmother and she would always have on thick make-up and a colorful manicure. When I asked for an interview, she refused on the spot saying, "I do not even want to open my mouth." I did not ask for it again. But since she lived near my workplace, I sometimes visited or ran into her and we were able to spend some time together. She spoke of her current daily life that she wanted to talk

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<sup>126</sup> See Behar 1993 and Wolf 1996 for extended discussions of fieldwork research ethics and (presumed) power relations.

to me and made jokes, but she never brought up anything from her past or the sex trade. Unlike the description of her in several existing works, her determination to keep her past silent, uninterrupted, and unrevealed was the most dramatic form of resistance by showing her will/desire “not to vulgarize her life with language.”<sup>127</sup>

Within these contexts, interviewees or NGO clients often exchanged their stories (information) and the images of victims in exchange for any support from social agents they want to get or resist it. Because they are too subtle and unfamiliar, such contexts are often not considered carefully by scholars and activists. However, as the researcher observes the researched the researched likewise observes the researcher.

The equation of freedom with voice and visibility, which assumes recognition to be unproblematic, has been naturalized (Brown 1996). Further, social distance has been considered the cause of social problems since it refers to a failure of empathetic understanding among people (Murphy 1964). Such social distance might even be problematic to researchers and the NGOs who want to communicate and make them understand. However, as Coronil and Skurski (2006) argue, “witnessing does not

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<sup>127</sup> I paraphrase the passage of “not to vulgarize her life with language” from Friedrich Nietzsche (*Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ* quoted in Brown 1996): “We no longer esteem ourselves sufficiently when we communicate ourselves. Our true experiences are not at all garrulous. They could not communicate themselves even if they tried. That is because they lack the right word. Whatever we have words for, that we have already got beyond... Language, it seems, was invented only for what is average, medium, communicable. With language the speaker immediately vulgarizes himself.”

I was not unaware of her determination not to reveal and interpret her life by outsiders and carefully control any relations and discussions with others. The reason to put her story here is not only to evidence her will to keep silent but also to remind and emphasize the discrepancy of representation and actuality, and the political nature of interpretation/translation in the process of knowledge production.

necessarily imply that investigators should seek to unearth and give voice to hidden narratives; rather it suggests the importance of following the cultural norms that connect pain and language among a people, forms that indicate the particular social paths and recognition and healing can take” (14).<sup>128</sup> As we have seen, the process of recognition itself could be violent. Thus the questions we need to consider are “Why and in what contexts (social interactions) do they choose to be socially distant through removal and reserve, and silence and in what context do they want to speak?” As Visweswaran (1994) puts it, “if we do not know how to ‘hear’ silence, we cannot apprehend what is being spoken, how speech is framed” (51).

### **3. The Meaning of Having Agency: Structure and Agent**

Before considering specific forms of subversions of the women, I first explore the meaning of having agency. There is a deep-seated analytic division in understanding social phenomena within social science, the division between structure/macro level and agent/micro level.<sup>129</sup> In existing studies on the sex trade, the debate has been translated into either coercion or choice. Since this debate is powerful and pervasive,

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<sup>128</sup> In the same context, Das also reminds us that “we may end by using our capacity to ‘unearth’ hidden facts as a weapon. Even the idea that we should recover the narratives of voice becomes problematic when we realized that such narratives cannot be told unless we see the relationship between pain and language that a culture has evolved” (2007, 57-8); See Fernandes 2003 for an extended discussion of the ethical practice of witnessing.

<sup>129</sup> See Simmons 1998 for a preliminary analysis of sex worker’s agency in terms of the tension between structure and agent.

it needs to be examined. For example, a feminist sociological stance on this matter is like this:

I always look for different levels of analysis. Micro level of analysis, there also needs to be a macro level. When I see people talking about sex work, sometimes they include both levels. But often they just include micro. They're talking about women's agency, women making choices, because they just don't want to see women as victims. I think in the past and maybe especially social workers, or some church-related organizations and organizers did see women mainly as victims. I think now we've gotten to the other end; and we don't want to say women are victims. Some people don't want to say women are victims, because it makes them weak and passive. When we meet these women, they're not entirely weak or passive. So at the micro level, they have some agency. But at the macro level, there is a relationship in place in the *gijichon*, which links the U.S military policy to South Korean government policy. The governments together agree that the *gijichons* should exist. Even though in the past, prostitution was not legal in South Korea and now there is a 2004 anti prostitution act. But nevertheless the *gijichon* exists. (Interview with a feminist activist, August 2006)

Her conclusion is incontrovertible. However, "it is crucial to stress that when feminists speak of women as victim it is in a complex material sense" (Mani 1998, 21). Further the divisional understanding of structural victim and agent at the micro level can not be theoretically effective since the gap between one another is schematic and too deep. Such a framework does not invite us to look at the question, "By what mechanisms do social inequalities and oppressions become embodied as individual experience" as Farmer (1997) incisively points out. Besides, the underlying idea presumes that the underprivileged are essentially and always "acted upon," leaving little room for more subtle issues of desire, aspiration, frustration, anxiety or a myriad

of other states of the soul (Agustín 2003a). Their “identity” itself is defined as a victim. Such an understanding unwittingly assumes that “people have full control over their circumstances” which is grounded on the bourgeois concept of agency as the free will of an autonomous self.

A Russian immigrant in a documentary film, *Women Building a House on the Road* (MSP 2007) reveals the intensive conflict between social representation and one woman’s own subjectivity, and further tension between structure and agent. She does not work in a club but lives with a GI in the film.

Nobody wants to be a slut. It doesn’t matter how you can be smart or not. (People say) If you are smart, you can go and get a job. But I tried back in my home. I worked a lot whole life. I can never get something, it is not because not being smart. I don’t have rich family I cannot pay for my college, I cannot get good job. I cannot marry if I don’t finish to college. I cannot save money because back to my home I don’t have an apartment, I don’t have nothing, every months I just have to pay rent room. I have made a decision to come to Korea. I come to Korea but I still don’t want to be a slut. Ok, everywoman inside heart (they are) not whore, not prostitute. Probably some women are slutty, slut like “everymen.” But I mean, if I want to have some romance with someone, it is my choice. But I don’t want to be with somebody, and nobody cannot make me. Nobody cannot make me to do this people, to do with this people. They are just sitting their face smile, inside heart big scream. I always think what is going on this world. I never say some people, some woman whoever really (are) prostitutes, they cannot do something, yeah, because they come to work in Korea like me. But they don’t get any luck, they have more bad company, bad manager, (they) take them to (?) and Dongducheon. And Korea has too many places, bad places where I don’t know. Go back, go try away from them, manger, go try to say something to police but nobody care. Everybody says it’s your “fault,” that is why you come here. “We come to” here because we want money, we come here because our country doesn’t care us. We don’t have good economy we want money, it’s not our fault “too.” We want to eat and we want good life “like everybody else.” If you are a little bit lucky

in this world, and you don't have to do shit works, it doesn't mean that you are better than "us." It's just life. Nobody knows what happens tomorrow.

While presenting the actuality of life and emotion, she concludes that "it (practicing sex trade) is not our fault too." How do we understand such a tension between personalized responsibility, choosing to immigrate, and structural settings such as the Russian economy and bad (work) places in Korea? What does that mean that less powerful people have some agency? This question needs a fundamentally different and practical understanding of agency in relation to structure (and reconsideration of the concept of identity/identification as I have noted in chapter 4). As Agustín (2005b), in speaking of women's immigration in Europe, puts it:

Granting agency to migrating individuals does not mean denying the vast structural change that push and pull them. On the other hand, granting them autonomy does not mean making them over-responsible for situations largely not of their own making. Global, national, and local conditions intervene in individuals' decision, along with doses of good and bad luck. (226)

Agustín's claim sounds too simple. In (western and middle class) feminist academia, the operation of causal variables often have not been considered due to the strong and deep-rooted belief in choosing and self-managing the individual, autonomous self. But ironically, it is as simple as to acknowledge that people should not be "over-responsible for situations largely not of their own making" as the first step to understanding the agency of less powerful social groups. Furthermore, it is needless to

say that, to borrow McClintock's expression (1993), we should not "theoretically confuse social 'agency' and identity with social 'context'" (emphasis in original).

Only such a fundamental reconsideration of agency can provide us with more constructive discussion and make us overcome a dichotomous debate on victimhood and agency, reflexive resistance, and eclectic understanding i.e., they are victims of structure, but at an individual level, they are agents.

#### **4. The Everyday Nature of Inequity and Subversion**

A theoretical gap between structure and agent has been supplemented by some theorists who redefine the relationship between subjectivity and subjection, and everydayness of inequity and subversions in various contexts (Abu-Lughod 1990, Das 2007, Parreñas 2001, Skeggs 1997). They all share a critical theoretical position with which I am sympathetic. They all draw on a Foucault's well-known statement "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1978, 95) and Judith Butler's statement, "the analysis of subjection is always double, tracing the condition of subject formation and tracing the turn against those conditions for the subject -and its perspective- to emerge" (1997, 29).

Drawing upon Veena Das (2007) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1990), to better understand the nature of social violence, resistance, and subjectivity of underprivileged people, I claim that we should overcome the question of what kinds of heinous violence people were subjected to. Overemphasizing (sexual) violence inflicted on women hinders one from looking at the less dramatized and consistent, violent reality and the question of the formation of subjectivity itself through endurance, re-narration, and recuperation. Das (2007) insightfully points this:

What is it to bear witness to the criminality of the societal rule that consigns the uniqueness of being to eternal forgetfulness, not through an act of dramatic transgression but through a descent into everyday life - to not simply articulate loss through a dramatic gesture of defiance but to inhabit the world, or inhabit it *again*, in a gesture of mourning? It is in this context that one may identify the eye not as the organ that sees but the organ that weeps. The formation of the subject as a gendered subject is then molded through complex transactions between the violence as the ordinary moment and the violence as it seeps into the ongoing relationships and becomes a kind of atmosphere that cannot be expelled to an “outside.” (62; emphasis in original)

Das disagrees with the division between the suppressed and the suppressor, between power and resistance that surrounds women who are exposed to gendered violence.

She goes on to explain that it is the knowledge of how women have applied their experiences of violence to their current daily lives and how living their lives alongside “poisonous knowledge -really knowing not just by intellect but the passions-” that is the relevant question for them (chapter 4).



In the same context, another point to remember here is the everyday nature of social oppression and subversions within the power relations. In studies on resistance (of women in the sex trade), either protests against violence and establishment of self-help organizations or rehabilitation and quitting the practice have been considered as forms of resistance. Yet this is not the case. This is because inequalities and oppression proliferate on a daily basis and subversions occur within daily power relations (Kleinman and Kleinman 1997, Kleinman 2000, Skeggs 1997). This is called “a diagnostic power” by Abu-Lughod (1990).<sup>130</sup> To emphasize again, what we need to be concerned with is not fixed identity but the ongoing relationship in the ordinary experience and the “patient work” of living with the poisonous knowledge of women (Das 2007). Building on these theoretical stances on agency and the everydayness of inequity and subversion, I present one Korean woman’s life history to demonstrate how social reality is actualized.

I first met Myeongsun Kim in her fifties in June of 2006 on a U.S military base with the staff members from the MSP. The meeting was held for married women or

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<sup>130</sup> The assumption underlying this concept is that we should not “ask about the status of resistance itself but about what the forms of resistance indicate about the forms of power that they are up against” (1990, 48). The form she has described for Bedouin women suggests that some of the kinds of power relations, in which they are caught up, work through restrictions on movement and everyday activities. In this context, for example, all sorts of minor defiance of restrictions enforced by elder men in the community happen, including secret visits to friends and relatives as well as women smoking in secret. These forms of resistance indicate that the one way power is exercised, in relation to women, is through a range of prohibitions and restrictions which they both embrace, in their support for the system of sexual segregation, and resistance, as suggested by the fact that they fiercely protect the inviolability of their separate sphere, that sphere where the defiance take place (Ibid., 43).

women engaged to GIs having legal and administrative problems in their relationships. She attended the meeting with her friend to get any information in regards to her situation. After the meeting, on the way home, the staff introduced themselves to her and we had a session at her home which was near the base. Her American husband, who used to work at the military, and now works at a private company, filed for divorce without any notice in 2005. She was in the middle of the (first) trial when we first met. She did not want a divorce because of her only son and she did not believe in her (first) lawyer's ability. She lived alone and we are told that her son lived with her husband in a nearby area. To add to her troubles, her health at the time was not great. MSP suggested they could provide legal support for her.

When I visited her alone for an interview one year later, she was studying Korean hand acupuncture (during our interview, I was told that she was always interested in acupuncture and after her divorce trial she had to worry about how to live financially without her husband. Another of the NGOs which she got involved with later offered to pay for the acupuncture classes and she was learning it now). As soon as I entered her house, the first thing she asked was how to take photos. I found out later that she had to take a picture of her husband cheating with a woman from the Philippines for the trial and was not successful at all despite several tries. She lost the first trial and

was at her second trial with a new lawyer whom the MSP provided for her. Her physical condition was still not good and she was now on medication.

The problem she was facing was not only the result of having an American as a husband. Her problems were things that occurred while trying to resolve her situations and problems which she confronted: divorce itself and resentment of her husband, concern for her son, poor health condition, the complicated process of the lawsuit including different positions regarding divorce between herself and the MSP and the tension between the NGOs around her case, the authoritarian and degrading attitudes of workers in court during the trial, and gossip and disregard of her situation by the village people.

The court filing she got unexpectedly in 2005 said that she would pay him 400 dollars until 2009. It also said that if there were not any actions on her part, they would assume that she would be accepting what they said. Her husband did not expect her to prepare for the lawsuit and was perplexed when she first appeared in court. According to Kim, her husband had cheated on her with a Filipina woman and the only reason why he lived with his son was to make her son take care of him. Since he was too obese, he needed a helper to manage his daily life. Thus when he needed the son to work, the son could not even go to school. She was worried about her son's situation and schooling. She had taken care of her husband despite his several affairs

and got a divorce trial all of sudden. Thus, either way was not fair to her: “I’m upset if I get divorced and I’m upset if I don’t get divorced.” She did not want to divorce him mainly because of her son, and if she really had to divorce him, she wanted to wait until he became of age.

Because the trial was getting complicated and she lost at the first trial, she sought other alternatives such as financial compensation in exchange for the divorce.

However even this was not easy to obtain. When she requested financial compensation, the court wanted to know the amount of her husband’s pension and photos as evidence of her husband’s cheating. She tried to get that information with staff members from the NGOs but did not succeed.

(In court at the second trial, at first) I said that I didn’t want alimony, but let me go to the hospital for about 2-3 years with our marriage remaining legal. The judge said that he couldn’t do something that was not in law. He said that he did not want in the way of another person’s (her husband’s) happiness. That was what the judge said. My (second) lawyer said that I met a good judge. Court itself is good, but the law is a cold-blooded thing, right? I don’t know... I didn’t have any reasons to lose, but I lost (at the first trial).

She also mentioned the domineering attitude of the judge, and she interpreted that it was because of her powerlessness such as having no (socially influential) friends who could support her in court:

You know what the judge said? I should have recorded what the judge said. It was June. That day he (husband) didn’t come and his lawyer didn’t come either. The judge

says, “Do you know the law? Do you have money?” He was treating me like nobody because there was nobody (who support me) there. If I knew the law better, I would’ve recorded what he said, “Do you know the law? Do you have the money?” He told me to give him 10,000 dollars. (The judge himself said it?) Yeah, would I lie? I’m not a deaf yet. There were “so many” unfair situations. I am not even a human being and I am just walking around. When the court date comes, I take different medications to calm myself down, but it doesn’t really work. The court is not a place to be... There was no reason why I had to lose on the first trial. If a smart (powerful) person around me came or my friends helped, I wouldn’t have lost. I never cheated, gambled, or ran away with money. I just helped and took care of my husband, but he cheated on me many times and got kicked out. I suffered, and it doesn’t make sense that I lost.

She emphasized how authoritarian workers in court were and how unfairly the lawsuit proceeded. She attributed the unfairness to her gender, class, and national difference in comparison to her American husband’s.

Meanwhile, after experiencing the complicated situation in working with the MSP, she wanted to do it by herself: “I told them frankly that I would just do it myself. I ‘honestly’ told them that I didn’t want the MSP... I simply told them that I didn’t want to do it. So I told them thank you for helping me until now and that I would do it by myself.” Despite the staff’s resistance that she did not trust them, she made a decision to proceed with the lawsuit on her own: “Of course I thanked them for whatever they did, but if I don’t like it, I don’t like it.” (At the time she and the MSP worked with the first lawyer.) For an appeal, she needed to hire a new lawyer and she was advised to get a public defender from the court. At that time, she was introduced to another NGO she had never heard of, which supported women in the camptowns

near her house. When she explained her situation, she was told that they did not have enough money to get a lawyer. In the process of getting a public defender with the new NGO she contacted, she was told to hire the lawyer only when she was beaten enough with evidences of bruises or scars. Since she did not have them, she couldn't get one. While she was panicking, the contact was made between the MSP with a new lawyer and her. But they had a different position on the divorce. While the MSP suggested she divorce him, she did not want it. With tentative agreement of divorce (she wanted it this time with pension for the rest of her life in mind), the divorce (second trial) restarted. Her anxiousness/anger was not toward the different positions on the divorce but, rather on the procedures about how the relevant social agents proceeded. She felt as though she was being unfairly treated by them: as a working/low class client she felt that she wasn't given the basic considerations that other's would receive. She emphasized her own agency in any decisions she made during the process.

All I'm saying is that "I'm the one who decided to get a divorce or not. I said that I don't understand why she (staff member) was forcing me to do it. I guess (know) she's saying that if I'm going to get a divorce, let's get some money out of it. I think she means well, but I... "I" want to get a divorce when my child gets a little older. When I get a divorce, let me get a monthly pension until I die.

During the second trial, the court and lawyer suggested getting photos showing husband's cheating on her. As noted earlier, her attempts were unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, the other NGO made a decision not to get involved in her case when they heard that the MSP was going to hire a lawyer for her. She found herself to be in an ambiguous position between two NGOs:

They think I got a “huge” help from them. They think that I’m trying to get help from both places and I became an offender when I’m really not. They said it “themselves” that they wanted to help me when I said I didn’t want it. I said I didn’t want to do anything with MSP and I cut ties with them to do it my own. They said they were going to hire a lawyer and things happened from there. Another NGO said they were going to accept me so I cut ties with MSP and went, but I’m just suffering and stuck in the middle. I honestly told them that I met with MSP a few times at the military base, but cut ties with them. So I thought I was done with them and went to another NGO because they said they would help me. Then MSP called and told me that they were going to hire a lawyer. What am I? huh? So then people hate me here and there. I don’t even take any advantage of anyone or get any help, but this happened.

The American husband’s desertion of his wife (girlfriend) and children followed by unmatched expectations between a woman’s long term and stable marriage-like relationship coupled with the man’s inability to offer financial support is one of the most common phenomena in the camptowns.<sup>131</sup> In practice, some women got help from MSP with regard to divorce. They wanted legal divorces since the women’s

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<sup>131</sup> My Sister’s Place, *Casebook for Counseling Support of Sexual Victim in Gijichon*, 2005; I introduce deeper context of the relationship: “When I had an interview (with a Russian girl), she was saying that their status is ‘so much’ different. She sees some woman who wants to find true love. She doesn’t think that’s possible because she came because she didn’t have money. When you date someone, you would naturally want to depend on that person for money. But the U.S. soldiers want girlfriends without trouble. They just want a girlfriend in Korea. Some girls want true love and money at the same time, she doesn’t see how this is possible. Since it is a space of mating, within everything happens within the space. Although she has a man whom she really wanted to marry but in practice she should get married to other man, Women just get pregnant. Some just get abortion. Others give a birth.” (Interview with Jeongsu Kim, July 2007)

American husbands had disappeared or went back to the U.S. some time ago. Since a long absence of one's partner is a legitimate reason for legal divorce, it is not difficult to win the lawsuit even without the husband's appearance in Korean court. Thus women who wanted legal divorces regardless of any alimony were quite satisfied with the NGO's support. However, in such a situation where the client did not really want a divorce and the lawsuit did not go according to plan, such complicated situation emerged and the NGO seemed to choose more convenient alternative ways to manage the problems (Lerum 1999).

Sometime later, she could get financial support (in learning acupuncture) from another NGO with active support from one of the staff members there whom she wanted to express her gratitude for the help. When our interview was almost done, she asked if I could look for an investigation agency to take some photos. She asked me for help because she did not have a computer and bad things happened to her continuously, which resulted in her lack of trust in people.<sup>132</sup>

Kim's instance clearly demonstrates how the everydayness and (structural) intersectionality of inequity (Crenshaw 1994, Farmer 1997, Glenn 1985) have materialized into the husband's divorce trial, complicated lawsuit, her ambiguous

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<sup>132</sup> I found an investigation agency near where she lived. It was going to cost at least \$2,000 and I had thought that it would be hard for her since she told me she could not pay a monthly rent and she worried she might be cheated by the agency because it was illegal, but I gave her the phone number nonetheless. Later I called her to see what happened but she told me that she had not made any decisions yet.



position between the two NGOs, and even emotional feelings. With respect to the everydayness of inequity, what I was impressed with was the way oppression and inequality was experienced through affectivity. As I have noted in chapter 4, most informants neither identify themselves as sex workers nor deny that they are sex workers even when speaking about the sex trade. But the way of remembering oppression was similar. Some informants intensively spoke about the resentment and indignation they felt toward others who were associated with how badly they were treated throughout their lives. Some women continuously revealed how they were disregarded (for instance because they are poor or women) or how they refused the identification of a western whore in their daily lives.<sup>133</sup> The women's experiences and narratives demonstrate that (structured) oppression and resistance against it have not been demonstrated as collective activities and open forms of resistance. That is, we do not recognize our oppression and social constraints through the highly abstract terms of patriarchy, imperialism, and classism but through our daily experiences and affective elements of consciousness and relationships (Parreñas 2001, Skeggs

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<sup>133</sup> Because of such a nature of oppression, the stories of agency the women remembered in their lives which they felt worthy of emphasizing to me were presented in the following contexts. For instance, one elderly woman was kicked out because of her infertility which turned out later was her husband's problem. After she got pregnant with a GI and knew it was not her problem, she went to the former Korean husband's and got his apologies. One woman who left home due to the husband's womanizing recalled how she confronted her husband's request of divorce: "I deliberately didn't divorce him until then (He had a baby with another woman). He must be in hurry because he needs to register the birth of the child. He browsed in the computer to look for. I didn't make one move while he came here. Why do I have to go to there when he needed it? So he came to me"

1997).<sup>134</sup> As I briefly noted earlier, even when she accepted the MSP's suggestion to divorce her husband, what she was anxious about was not the decision to divorce itself but the process and authoritative attitude of people involved in her case. That was one of the crucial reasons for the change in her decision to get a divorce. Thus, although she knew it would be more difficult to get a new lawyer, she wanted to stop getting help from the NGO since she didn't want to sacrifice her self-esteem in favor of some material support.

Needless to say, the intersectional oppression has constrained Kim's current and daily life. It has been substantiated into many various forms such as (unwanted) divorce, unfair and complicated lawsuit, and conflicts with people around her case. Yet the divorce trial against an American husband does not mean that she automatically becomes a victim. She had employed every possible resource which helped ameliorate her situation within the range she could manage. They include her decision to get a divorce during the lawsuit process, the decision to not get legal support from the MSP to keep her self-reliance and self-esteem, and getting support from another NGO despite the complex and difficult process. Especially her decision to change her decision to divorce was even "contradictory" enough to cause a

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<sup>134</sup> Similarly, in studying England young working class women, Skeggs (1997) suggests the emotional politics of class fueled by insecurity, doubt, indignation and resent (but also lived with pleasure and irreverence) as one of the critical markers of class distention at the intimate level in addition to exclusion and non-respectability (90, 162). Parreñas (2001), studying Filipina domestic workers in a global economy, interprets the practical consciousness of non-belonging as one dislocation of their lives.

problem with the NGO who tried to support/solve the case. As I have implied throughout this chapter, the customary focus on gendered and traumatic sexual violence or militarism itself never provide us with the tools to look at such subtle and everyday inequities and subversions which could better explain the women's actual lives.

In the meantime, my point in addressing the tensions between NGOs and the interviewees is not intended to dismiss the practical role of the NGOs in supporting the women in the sex trade. We should also consider that the NGOs have their own institutional difficulties such as low salaries and lack of human resources in conjunction with highly excessive work, difficulty with getting active governmental support, and lack of solidarity with other related communities (Murdock 2003). However the NGOs are one of the significant social agents that reproduce knowledge of the women. The possibility that helpers also might reproduce the marginalization and violence to the women they want to support must be questioned. This is because any conflict or tension between NGOs and their clients is also another form of structural violence based on dominant groups' own material and institutional interests and identity (Agustín 2007, Cheng 2002, Lerum 1999). As Skeggs (1997) rightfully puts it, any political change does not happen in an abstract structural level but in daily lives and daily interactions.

## 5. Conclusion

The mainstream understandings of Korean women in the sex trade in camptowns are as follows: victimization from the nationalist perspective such as *han* and fatalism, and victimization with a focus on women's exploitation and oppression. More recently after the systematic role of two governmental authorities to the sex trade in camptowns has been recognized, the discourse of "political victim" replaces the existing ones. By directing the focus on the factual process of the strategy of victimization, I have argued that the victimization is not simply a distorted, limited representation but also a very political process that involves interlocutors' own interests such as preservation of moral authority. As McClintock (1993) argues, "the slave-doll image serves as a ventriloquist's dummy, through which (middle-class) women voice their interests, at the expense of the sex workers' needs. Many sex workers, however, are feminists themselves" (8-9).

I have argued that some typical feminist forms of resistance such as "negotiation" "empowerment" "choice" are limited and reflexive revolving around the belief in the autonomous self and never disrupt the division between victimhood and agent. Thus I have claimed that to better understand the question of agency and resistance, the first thing we should recognize is the reconsideration of agency in relation to structure and everydayness of inequity and subversions: "Granting them (the less privileged)

autonomy does not mean making them over-responsible for situations largely not of their own making” (Agustín 2005b). I further claim that “the act of speech” which is a critical way to exert agency of the less powerful, does not guarantee a liberating effect to the speaker/represented, and in essential speech is not identical to voice. Thus the women often employ unlikely and less dramatic forms such as silence, social distance, and daily (contradictory) subversions in the social environments they face. These forms of resistances are often neglected because they are not only subtle but also unfamiliar forms in existing studies. Furthermore the negligence is reinforced by the fact that specific process of knowledge production remains silent. But it should be reminded that unlike customary unequal power relationship between interviewee and interviewer, interviewees also observe interviewers/social agents in whom they engage and thus make a decision on what kind of knowledge/information to give and to what extent. This is the most fundamental and critical step in understanding and theorizing the women’s agency and empowerment.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The question of the sex trade in foreign camptowns is a condensed and extensive phenomenon linked to sexuality, economy, interstate relations and the reproduction of a nation-state both in a local and global context. Thus depending on researchers' specializations and individual backgrounds, various approaches and issues can be discussed.

My focuses were the women's lives and discourses. I used the method of political ethnography. This research is not as much a historical leaning but, rather, a theoretical one centering on such concepts as social identity/identification, knowledge production on the sex trade, the articulation between nation, class, gender and race, (daily and intersectional) inequity and agency.

My central question was, "How do people, particularly the less powerful, 'inhabit' the world?" This question has already presumed critical arguments regarding the relationship between structure and agent, social identity and violence. That is, it presumes that any human being who suffers or faces disadvantaged situations and looks seemingly powerless, in terms of certain categories of power and structural constraints, has always had agency. I have suggested that the real question to consider is: "In what way do people achieve it rather than the question of whether they are either the victim or the agent?" Another key assumption of the question is the focus of

analysis on the descent into the ordinary rather than/as well as on the violence itself (Das 2007).

I was concerned with two discourses surrounding the women: first, the context of national identity in a local Korean society and second, the debate on the sex trade itself in feminist academia and activism. The debatable essence of the subject of women involved in the sex trade in U.S. camptowns has centered on “the sexual liaisons with foreign nationals” in the public sphere and academia. The nationalist appropriation of the women results in the critique of U.S. imperialism by placing the women as subjects of retribution and compassion in the Korean society. These discourses reflect both the nationalist anxiety to threaten the divide between Korean and foreign nations (U.S.) and the sensationalism of sexuality which accompanies only sexualized identity. The overwhelming concentration on sexuality and ensuing exploitation of women have resulted in a substantial critique of prostitution itself.

I have explored discursive and political implications of the existence of social groups transcending the naturalized border: The existence of Amerasians and women in the sex trade in the camptowns has always been a polemic issue because they destabilize the “imagined and naturalized” national identity through transgressing proper roles of the national body, familial state (or birth) and biologically essentialist definition of race. I have also argued that in spite of the binary focus on nation and

gender, two predominant strands of discourse -nationalist narratives and visible feminist rhetoric- shared class based views on the women in the sex trade. Reasoned analysis on the disparate power relations between two nations should be carefully discerned from patriarchal nationalism and the unitization of the women's class based bodies and suffering.

Methodologies of conventional studies on the sex trade tend to begin with dichotomous questions and subsequently make dichotomous conclusions: choice or enforcement, victim or agent, and work or sexuality. Even when many studies on the sex trade began with similar assumptions as my own, it seemed to reproduce the vicious circle. I have suggested that because the debate on the issue of prostitution in existing studies has a tendency to be essentially moralized and based on middle class perspectives. Such a tendency often fell on either the resultant victimization or the reverse valuation of suffering and pain, rather than "poisonous knowledge" (Das 2007), "abundance from hard labor" (Mies 1999) and "unique vividness from poverty" (W. Pak 1999), which are essentially different from romanticization of resistance. The practical problem with such a lack of understanding at a discursive level, coupled with the poverty of alternative theoretical tools, is that it keeps reproducing the daily based violence. Additionally, the tendency that the identity of



women in the sex trade is always and infinitely (over)determined by only the lens of sexuality is not merely misrepresentation but also malicious violence.

Based on the women's narratives and life histories, I have claimed that the practice of the sex trade is not a question of sex but is on the continuum of other informal works throughout their lives. Being subject to victimization at one stage of their lives does not mean that their identities are permanently defined as victims. They also exert various forms of identities. With respect to agency, they employ unlikely forms of subversions including silence and social distance. This is because oppressions and inequities are daily, multiple and intersectional rather than through abstracted realities such as patriarchy, militarism, and global capitalism. More fundamentally, this is because the act of speech is not identical to voice (Das 2007).

During the course of my fieldwork and through this writing process, I became convinced of how deeply simple and pervasive terms such as oppression, violence, and victim in academic writings have been abused by writers. As noted, oppression and violence do not take dramatic, visible forms but are subtle, pervasive and lasting for every individual. This ranges from daily meals, health conditions, housing status, the ways they spend time and the forms of work they do to interpersonal relationships and affective feelings. Whether it is structural or not, it often has critical and sometimes infinite impacts on individuals. As I have argued, it does not mean that

women in the sex trade suffer violence without any struggles, rather that they maneuver their worlds through more subtle ways which social agents often do not want to or do not recognize. At the same time, it is important to note that we need to acknowledge that agents should not be over-responsible to social environments.

There are some limitations (and further research) I should note in this research. Even though I fully understand the nature of structural oppression generated by the U.S. military authorities and the Korean government, I limit the analysis to internal dynamics surrounding camptowns. I do not mean to (even unconsciously) ignore naturalized features of high politics, but my focus and interests are aimed more toward internal dynamics. That is, I do not dismiss the essential relationship between state, structure, process/policy, and agent; rather the limited focus on the internal dynamics is intended for a realistic approach and to caution against a constructed discourse of political, historical victimhood. The reason for the importance to the challenge is that the discourse is another form of orientalist knowledge in the international context.

There are some conceptual analyses which need further examination. One is the relationship between anti-Americanism and democratization movements, and the constitution of anti-Americanism in the context of colonialism. Although I was fully aware of their significance in fundamental and important ways, the extensiveness of

the task and full examination remain left out with partial brief descriptions. Another aspect I need to address is the sex trade itself. As I have implied and partially explained, the politics of sex trade has deep implications on the economic system and state which impels us to investigate extensive theoretical tasks such as the disruption between marriage and sex trade. In the process of reviewing existing studies I found that, in spite of voluminous works on sex trade and prostitution all over the world, there are very few theoretical works which attempt to “disrupt” the division between marriage and sex trade, and radically examine in the economic sense enough to subvert the existing concept of economy based on wage earning labor. In a similar vein, the relationship between sexuality, nation and economic system (i.e. capitalism) is also a critical issue to consider. Furthermore, while writing this dissertation, the practical relationship between middle class in the 1970s and prostitution in the context of social management in Korea came up as an interesting issue, which needs further research.

With these limitations, this research makes contributions to conventional studies in the following respects: First, by exploring the deeper political and discursive realities of the sex trade in camptowns in terms of the reproduction of the nation-state and concepts of race, class and gender. Second, revealing the very political process with respect to knowledge, power, and methodology of the sex trade in the continual

reproduction of victimization as well as various forms of victimization. Third, the depiction of women in the sex trade maneuvering their strategies on a daily basis by reconsidering the concept of power and agency of the underprivileged as well as their own identity.

As Skeggs (1997) notes it, inadequate understandings do not motivate any political change. Furthermore unawareness based on social identity and privilege would be practical violence in any social relations. This is because any knowledge and knowledge production, including unawareness, are operated in power relations. I hope this research makes a contribution to provide a better understanding on the facet of social actuality. As another deeper hope, I wish this research has ultimately shown the fact that it could never be possible to divide any forms of politics, ethics, knowledge, language, daily actions and even imagination.

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