

**Divorce in Contemporary Korea:
Individualization, Intimacy and Gender**

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ABSTRACT

The rise of divorce rates is seen as the main indicator of the changes in the family structure/life in South Korea – changes from the traditional to the modern (or late-modern). Drawn from interviews with 30 Korean women and men who had divorced, I explore changed dimensions and contexts of ‘doing’ heterosexual intimacy, and how it is understood, explained and challenged in the stories women and men tell about their divorces. Divorced women and men, in narrating their past, ‘failed’ marriages, describe the particular marital and moral contexts of doing/failing heterosexual intimacy – the contexts experienced and narrated as ‘gendered’ contexts. While Korean literature on divorce increasingly focuses on ‘intimate troubles’ as the main reasons for divorce, issues of heterosexual, marital intimacy are not separable from the ordering of traditional gender divisions in families. The idea of individualization derived from Giddens and Beck has been influential in Korea in explaining the rising divorce rate, but this analysis paints an incomplete picture of the reality of divorce as it ignores many aspects of the multidimensional ways in which people actually live family life. Greater attention needs to be paid to how men and women have different responsibilities in marriage and these responsibilities differ according to their social and cultural locations. In reality, women’s and men’s desires/expectations in marriage and their intimate marital relationships do not neatly correspond to simplified binaries such as tradition/modernity, dependence/independence and equality/inequality, but rather, women and men’s ‘doing family’ or ‘doing heterosexual intimacy’ need to be understood with the complex web of personal, social and moral relationships. From men and women’s narratives of divorce, in which ‘doing gendered work’ and ‘doing intimacy’ are narrated as closely interrelated issues, I aim to shed light on how meanings of gender differences are clearly embedded in heterosexual intimacy.

LIST OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
LIST OF TABLES	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	10
INTRODUCTION	11
CHAPTER 1	20
DIVORCE: INDIVIDUALIZATION, GENDER AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS	
1. Introduction	20
2. Divorce Trends in South Korea	21
3. Cultural and Social Impacts on Women's Lives	26
4. Western Debates about Intimacy and Gender Relationships	28
5. The Decline of Family Values?	32
6. Changing Intimate Relationships	35
7. Gendered Lives in Korea	39
8. Patriarchal Family System as the Main Basis of Divorce	46
9. Summary	49
CHAPTER 2	53
RESEARCHING MEN AND WOMEN: REFLECTIONS ON POWER, VALIDITY AND GENDER	
1. Introduction	53
2. The Field	55
2.1 The Process of Recruiting Interviewees	55
2.2 The Interview Location	59
3. Interview Process	61
3.1 Outline of the Themes	61
3.2 Interviews with Male Participants	63
3.3 Interviews with Female Participants	70
4. Analytical process	73
4.1 Validity	74
5. Summary	75

CHAPTER 3	77
MARRIAGE	
1. Introduction	77
2. Love and Marriage	80
2.1 Love	80
2.2 'Stories of Love' and 'Stories of Marriage'	82
2.3 Family Practices	83
3. Men's Stories of Marriage	84
3.1 A Woman of Good Character	86
3.2 Looking for a Good Wife/Carer	89
3.3 Responsibility and Love	91
4. Women's Stories of Marriage	93
4.1 The Daily Pressure to Get Married	93
4.2 Family Connections	96
4.3 A Man with Good Prospects	104
4.4 'He needed my help'	110
4.5 Sharing	113
5. Summary	116
CHAPTER 4	118
MORALITY: THE CENTRAL ISSUE IN DIVORCE NARRATIVES	
1. Introduction	118
2. Morality: The Central Issue in Divorce Narratives	118
3. Social Stigmatization of Divorce	120
3.1 Gossip	122
3.2 My Divorce is Different from Others	124
4. Men's Experiences	125
5. Explaining Women's Divorce	128
5.1 Divorced Women are So Strong	132
5.2 Risk in Public/Community	135
6. Summary	138
CHAPTER 5	140
HIS DIVORCE	
1. Introduction	140
2. Work and Money Problems	141
2.1 Hong-Sye's Story	143
2.2 Gendered Responsibility	147

3. Economic Success and Failure of Intimacy	154
3.1 Time	154
3.2 Trivial Issues	159
3.3 Wives Who Ask 'Too Much'	162
3.4 Communication	166
4. Sex and Relationship	170
5. Summary	174
CHAPTER 6	176
HER DIVORCE	
1. Introduction	176
2. Work and Money	178
2.1 Na-Ri's Story	178
2.2 He is Like a Child	180
2.3 Daily Emotional/Caring Work	184
2.4 'I did not talk about money'	189
2.5 Difficulties of Keeping Family Together	193
3. Intimacy	196
3.1 He only needs me as a wife	196
3.2 Lack of Consultation/Submission	200
3.3 Emptiness/Depression/Suffocation	205
4. Violence	209
5. Affairs	213
6. Summary	216
CHAPTER 7	218
THE PROCESS OF DIVORCE	
1. Introduction	218
2. Divorce: A Family's Decision	220
2.1 Sons' Divorce	221
2.2 Daughter's Divorce	223
3. Divorce: Child Custody Disputes	229
3.1 The Bond Between Mothers and Children	231
3.2 The Law and the Reality	235
3.3 Good/Bad Mothers	237
3.4 The Meanings Men Attach to Child Custody	240
4. Dividing the Family Assets	243
5. Summary	247

CHAPTER 8	249
THE GENDERED SELF AND POST-DIVORCE RELATIONSHIPS	
1. Introduction	249
2. Meanings of Loss and Change	250
3. Women: Post-Divorce Narratives	250
3.1 Loss and Change	250
3.2 Time and Change	254
3.3 A Sense of Freedom	256
4. Men: Post-Divorce Narratives	258
4.1 Loss and Change	258
4.2 The Loss of the Ideal Family	259
5. New Relationship and Remarriage	265
5.1 Men's Narratives About New Relationships	266
5.2 Women's Narratives About New Relationships	271
5.3 Having Freedom or Facing Economic Risk	275
5.4 Alternative Families	278
6. Summary	283
CONCLUSION	285
APPENDIX	
Appendix I The Years of/age at marriage and divorce and length of marriage years.	294
Appendix II The Level of Education (For Both Interviewee and Spouse)	295
Appendix III The Occupation Before/After Marriage (For Both Interviewee and Spouse)	296
Appendix IV Interview Themes	298
BIBLIOGRAPHY	299

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1	Divorce Decrees From 1970 to 2006	21
TABLE 2	Grounds for Divorce by Agreement	22
TABLE 3	Grounds of Divorce Suit (%)	23
TABLE 4	Grounds for Divorce Counselling from 1990 to 1999	24
TABLE 5	Trends in Educational Attainment	26
TABLE 6	Trends in Workforce Participation	40
TABLE 7	Trends in Marriage Partner Selection Process	77
TABLE 8	Men's perceived Reasons for Marriage Breakdown	140
TABLE 9	Women's Perceived Reasons for Marriage Breakdown	177
TABLE 10	Who Gains Child Custody	231
TABLE 11	Interviewees' Current Relationships	267

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis is solely my own work and no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted for another degree or professional qualification.

INTRODUCTION

My choice of 'divorce' as a research topic was strongly influenced by my personal experience as a divorcee. Through my personal experience of being a divorced woman, I began to find some of the contradictory ways in which divorced people are stereotyped and face moral stigmatization in Korean society. A woman who is divorced can be seen as too self-centred, too independent, too westernized, and too individualized – or as a helpless victim who needs sympathy. Telling people why I am divorced involved finding a way I can be culturally and morally accepted. Partly through this experience, I became interested in various (and contextual) ways in which the divorced woman or man's self is narratively constructed and how this process is located in a changing web of intimate/gender/social relations in Korea.

Most attention towards divorce has been directed at the possible effects of family change, and the most pervasive explanation has focused on the movement from traditional family to the companionate, modern family form, based on love and personal self-fulfillment. It is now commonly argued that the importance of self-fulfillment within marital unions raises expectations, rendering such unions more fragile than in the past. In a society where people presume that love and relationships are less stable and that there is less committed, the high divorce rate has been used as evidence of individualization, radical changes in gender relationships and transformed intimate relationships (Giddens, 1992; Beck 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Korea, with a rate of divorce on par of that to the West, also shares with the West a similar general diagnosis: the increase of individualization and the desire for intimate love. Many theorists argue that traditional social ties, based on the family and extended kinship structures, have been damaged through the influence of individualization and Westernization. The high incidence of

divorce is regarded as an inescapable symptom of an individualized and Westernized social world where each individual has their own values as responsible for their own welfare and can make their own life choices (Seo Soo Kyung, 2002; Kim Jeong Ok and Park Kyung Kyu, 1993; Lee Hyun Song, 1999, 2003).

In this thesis, I will critically evaluate this wider public discourse of 'family breakdown' in South Korea. In particular, I will pay attention to the ways in which the decline of traditional patriarchal gender relations, and the consequent rise of divorce rates are seen as the main influence of the changes to the family structure today (Cherlin, 1992). Particularly relevant here is Giddens's study on 'the transformation of intimacy' (Giddens, 1992). Giddens sees that today's heterosexual family life is based on equality between men and women. The society moves towards relationships based on emotional communication rather than institutionally given gender roles, providing frameworks for democratizing personal life. This process is then closely related with his accounts of the present 'separative and divorcing society'. For Giddens, both heterosexual marriage and divorce in contemporary society is internally bound, which argues that relationships are now only maintained through efforts - on both sides - to provide sufficient emotional satisfaction for each other. This, in turn, explains high rates of marriage breakdown: as a contrast with earlier notions of marriage as role and obligation, contemporary heterosexual relationship is inherently fragile as both men and women are willing to end the marital relationship if mutual emotional support and pleasure for both partners do not exist any longer.

However, the 'individualization of self' and 'the transformation of intimacy' does not simply mean that gendered practice and power relationship in marriage and family has become weaker (Jamieson, 1998; Jackson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999). Men and women related to the discourse of individualization in different ways. Or, to put it another way, they do not simply relate to each other or to others as 'individualized selves'. As wives or

husbands, mothers or fathers, or daughters and sons, their 'being' individual or their 'doing' intimacy/family are situated in a complex personal, relational, social, and gendered map of being/doing individual or family.

According to Jackson, despite family diversity and women's expectations of more egalitarian partnerships, 'the continuing lack of equality' can lead to 'much of the strain and instability in contemporary heterosexual relationships' (Jackson, 2007: 139). Diverse family relationships themselves do not delimit how heterosexual family relationships are normalized and gender inequalities are perpetuated within institutionalized heterosexuality (Jackson, 2007: 132). Furthermore, the existence of fluidity and diversity in the personal life course, recognized and acknowledged in contemporary society, brings at the same time, 'diverse' and 'conflicting' moral perspectives around family practices. And divorce, as part of this fluid web of relationships whereby the fluidity operates not only historically in relation to wider processes of social change, but biographically within the life course of individuals, becomes the centre of the moral debate over the meaning and practices around family. There has been an increased emphasis placed on individual 'free' choice in relation to divorce, but the extent to which various paradoxes and tensions exist in individual's divorce choices are not much discussed. 'Choice' also brings moral conflicts; the emphasis on choice does not pay sufficient attention to ways in which women and men, in choosing to divorce, differently negotiate their 'wants' with what is available in specific social or gendered situations. As a few of the women I interviewed said:

People don't know the process of divorce well. In TV drama, they treat divorce in very simple ways. They don't focus on what are the major things that lead to divorce and also what are main concerns in divorce. They don't consider children very seriously and importantly. Our society is not also interested in women's life and don't dig deep into women's and children's life. I think that you [interviewer] are doing a good thing. We need to popularize real family's life. [Ji-Sue]

Divorce has become such a big deal in our society. We can hear divorce stories everywhere. As divorce has become so common, people tend to think that people who divorced did it very easily. But that's not true. It took me so many years to divorce. [Han-Na]

I tend not to say 'I choose divorce'. If I say that way, people would think that I am a selfish and self-centered person. I met a few divorced women. They all say that they divorced because they were forced to choose that. They do not see their divorce as a kind of choice they made – as an alternative life choice. I think that the reason we all talk about our divorces that way may be related to social situations we live in. [Sue-Mi]

These women tell us that their experiences of divorce paint a complicated picture of individual choice, gender and culture, and also reveal that there is a gap between their personal stories of divorce and those publicly circulating in society. We value our individual choices, but when the choices that we make conflict with social values, the very word, 'choice', can bring moral condemnation to our actions, and we often need to explain the thinking behind our actions. This can bring continuous self-questioning about the choice around divorce, and in many cases, people even find it difficult to use the word 'choice' in relation to their decision to divorce. To escape from moral blame, individuals often explain their decision to divorce in terms of an 'inescapable forced choice'. This brings a paradoxical result. That is to say, while individuals still find it difficult to use the word 'choice' in relation to their decision to divorce, many theorists often simply link the increasing divorce rates in Korea with the increased 'free' choices available for individuals in relation to their personal and family relationships. Here, the increasing divorce rate is often depicted as clear evidence that shows the trend towards individualization in Korean society (Woo Ea Reoung, 1997). However, divorce involves a process in which I negotiate between what 'I' want with what is available or desirable in a given personal, relational, social and gendered

situations. Individual choices, negotiated and explained as such, are what Smart and Shipman (2004) call 'relational choice' or 'contextual choice'. Against the choice often identified with 'individual' 'free' choice, Smart and Shipman argue that:

Choice, as a concept, can be problematic because it can be read to mean 'free' or 'individual' choice rather than, in more sociological terms, contextual choice amongst socially constructed options, or relational choice taken in the setting of attentiveness to others (Smart and Shipman, 2004: 493).

Divorce is not a clean break from marriage or past relationships. Divorce is not, 'either' or 'or' but 'and' between past and present which opens 'the possibilities of alternatives, of openness and fluidity' for individual biography but not yet determined (Morgan, 1999: 24). Divorce is not simply an individual biography but a biography which is embedded within social and cultural realities. Women's and men's different social selves in relation to their gendered responsibilities in marriage become the most important fact in their attempts to make sense of their lives and their social selves as divorced people. As Morgan states, 'it is individuals with gendered social identities operating in household contexts that provide the dynamic of change' (Morgan, 1996: 35). In order to understand women's and men's everyday activities in relation to the meaning of marriage and their motives for divorce, I explore the complex ways in which women's and men's narratives about divorce reflect key debates about the meaning of individualization, intimacy and self bounded by socio-economic constraints and sociocultural expectations embedded in wider networks of social relationships.

My use of qualitative method through in-depth interviews with male and female divorcees derives from my research interests in finding a detailed gendered account for the experience of intimacy, marriage and divorce. Most of the research carried out in Korea is quantitative studies and people's

accounts of their experiences of divorce are not much studied. Within the statistical evidence to show the increasing rate of divorce, it becomes easier to accept western theory's concept of individualization and modernization without exploring the complex gendered and moral stories divorce brings with it. Therefore, stories of contextualized individual 'divorce' choices, which become covered under the statistical evidence, disappear. What also disappears are 'contextualized' women's voices in relation to their divorce.

In order to understand the multi-layered debates divorce brings about, my key research question is to explore how and to what extent Korean men's and women's accounts of divorce are interconnected with cultural and social change/continuity in family relationships. Women's and men's different beliefs and understandings of how they position themselves in relation to the 'other' lead to divergent motives and explanations for their marriages and divorces. According to Riessman, the ideal modern marriage in the Western context, which is thought to provide 'intimacy, primacy and companionship, and sex', is similarly found in both men's and women's narratives of divorce. Yet, she also contends that even the same 'ideology of the companionate marriage is, in fact, *two* [italics in original] ideologies - his and hers' (Riessman, 1990: 51). Even though the meaning of companionship based on 'intimacy, primacy and companionship, and sex' differs according to cultural contexts, I will discuss the ways in which men's and women's understandings of family and relationships bring about situations where their marriage can more accurately be described as 'his' and 'her' marriage and how this results in different family practices and their decision to divorce. Thus, this research is designed to explore the ways in which women's and men's narratives, from the process of choosing a marital partner to the post-divorce, shed light on different gendered lives in the family and in society in Korea.

I will begin my investigation in chapter 1, discussing key debates around the decline of family values, individualization, and the patriarchal family system along with the rapid increase of divorce in Korea. I will review the debates

about divorce and about the meaning of intimate marital relationships and explain how meanings of change and transformation of personal relationships are contested. I will discuss how the theory of individualization and the emphasis on inequality do not adequately grasp people's lived reality of family connections or disconnections and how this may result in simplified binaries such as tradition/modernity, dependence/independence and equality/inequality in explaining marriage/divorce practices in Korea.

In Chapter 2, I will address why I chose a qualitative method and also the process of doing cross-gender and same-gender research. I will particularly focus on the difficulties and different experiences I faced interviewing male participants. 'Gender' is the main consideration in analysing women's and men's accounts of divorce and also reflects women's and men's divergent processes of being interviewed. I will explain the ways in which the research is designed and raise the question of 'validity' in interpreting women's and men's accounts and pay particular attention to the ways tellers interpret their experiences of marriage, divorce from their different social locations. Throughout this research process I want to provide an opportunity for the divorced to go through a thoughtful assessment of their lives, and these assessments, in turn, become the basis for categories for my analysis and interpretation.

In Chapter 3, I will look at the ways in which the process of choosing a right marital partner highlight women's and men's different social locations within economic, social and cultural reality. I will discuss how different gendered expectations already underpin entry into marriage and negotiation of family practices before and after marriage and social norms on the ideal marital partner. Popular and academic emphasis on more free individual choices neglects the ways that women's and men's process of choosing the right marital partner is already interconnected with family and Korean social views on the ideal wife and husband. Both women and men experience tension between traditional and modern ideas of marriage and family relationships, but

this is more acutely felt by women, due to their lack of power in their families and in society.

The fourth chapter focuses on how the social prejudice surrounding divorce is reflected in women's and men's divorce storytelling and is interconnected within moral claims in a society where divorced people are considered as deviant. This brings particular importance to understand how men's and women's narratives contain 'representation, interpretation and reconstruction' (Jackson, 1998: 49) about their past in order to make a socially acceptable story and to claim their decision to divorce was not irresponsible or a selfish choice. Also, I will discuss how women's and men's experience of the stigma of divorce differs as a result of social views about the ideal women's and men's gendered responsibility in marriage.

In chapters 5 and chapter 6, I discuss how women's and men's understanding of the 'cause' of problems that lead to the breakdown of their marriage is narrated within the particular marital and moral context of doing/failing heterosexual intimacy. In chapter 5, by analyzing men's narrative of divorce, I focus on how men's accounts of 'work' and 'intimacy', as the basis of marital troubles, are interconnected with men's social selves as 'husbands'. In chapter 6, I discuss how women's prominent accounts of divorce, which also feature 'work' and 'intimacy' as the main troubles in marriage are narrated differently within women's gendered responsibility and marital burden. The contrast between his and her divorce brings gender relations in contemporary Korea into sharp relief.

In chapter 7, I discuss the major difficulties women and men faced during the divorce process which brings negotiation in terms of the couple and their wider kinship network. The process of gaining family support for the divorce and of resolving problems of child custody/ support and property divisions are major issues to women and men but those issues are gendered. Women's more frequent initiation of divorce can conceal their long struggles before they

finally reach divorce. Their lack of power and the control their husbands and wider families have over them makes the process particularly difficult for them. When women have children, their difficulties are exacerbated by the lack of social and legal supports to obtain the custody rights and the long delays in the legal proceedings.

In chapter 8, I explore changes in self identity after divorce, looking at how women's and men's experiences of loss links with the changes in view of marriage and positive and negative feelings in relation to future plans and expectations, economic hardship and the change of daily life and social life. These issues will be discussed by analysing how the gendered nature of post-divorce experiences brings major differences in women's and men's interpretation of their past and present and future. The different experience of 'loss' women and men interpret after divorce is clearly interconnected with gendered narratives of a 'new self'.

This thesis aims to explore how men's and women's narratives of divorce are closely interrelated with 'doing gendered work' and 'doing intimacy' which is perpetuated through daily social normalisation of knowledge and assumptions about ideal women's and men's heterosexual responsibilities. Gender, then, is crucial to analyse how people talk about the process of uncoupling as well as their motives for divorce and to understand underlying issues of gendered power and authority.

CHAPTER 1

DIVORCE: INDIVIDUALIZATION, GENDER AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

1. Introduction

The increasing awareness of divorce as a social issue within Korea is partly mirrored by a highly rated TV program in which divorced people share their stories of divorce and reasons for divorce. Throughout the program, the social and moral issues of divorce are explored and discussed, and the issues of family relationships and personal happiness are often irrevocably linked. The program highlights not only the increasing social interest in the 'issue' of divorce, but a deeper questioning about personal choice and responsibility in relation to family values and public morality.

The increased prominence of divorce as a public issue has prompted renewed consideration of women's increased autonomy in the family and society. Popular discourse suggests that women have become more independent, have a more individual view of their lives, and that heterosexual couples have become more equal. This impression of women's changing status in public and at home is supported by demographic statistics, which provide evidence of increases in women's life choices including choices of marriage and divorce. The increase of divorce in Korea is widely understood as reflecting the process of individualization, greater gender equality, and transformation of intimate relationships, which shape women's and men's lives in private and in wider social networks (Kim Sang Yong, 1996; Seo Soo Kyung, 2002; Lee Hyun Song, 1999, 2003). In this chapter, I critically analyse such accounts to explore whether they fully represent gendered individuals' family and marriage life.

Before exploring the debates around family and intimate relationships in marriage/divorce, I shall first consider the divorce trends in South Korea, which constitute the evidential basis of debates surrounding individualization, gendered work in marriage and daily family practices. In order to understand divorce trends within the particular socio-economic constraints and the socio-cultural expectations, I then analyze the debates around changing family relationships, individualization theory and feminist discussions of divorce. I shall explore the limitations of those debates and what aspects have to be considered further in a detailed analysis of marriage and divorce. Then, I discuss 'doing family work' in connection with the impact of institutionalised knowledge and beliefs about ideal heterosexual relationships and the central issue of inequality in marital relationships. This will form the context in which I explore the struggles and tensions in women's and men's view of marriage and divorce throughout this thesis.

2. Divorce Trends in South Korea

Korea has witnessed a sharp increase in divorce in the past two decades (see Table 1). The crude divorce rate has increased from 0.6 per 1000 population in 1980 to 2.9 per 1000 population in 2004 (Korea National Statistical Office, 2005). Since the 1990s, the divorce rate has rapidly risen, even though it did decrease a little to 2.6 per 1000 population in 2006 (Korea National Statistical Office, 2007). Also, divorce is not only more common among young married people but in all age groups. Among couples who have been married for more than 20 years, divorce has increased from 8.9% in 1996 to 19.2% in 2006. Among divorced people in 2006, the average number of years people remained married before divorce was 11.4 years, and 73.4% of divorcees were in the 30-40 age bracket when they got divorced (Korea National Statistical Office, 2007).

Table 1. Divorce Decrees from 1970 to 2006

Year	Numbers of divorce decrees	Rate per 1000 population
1970	11,615	0.4
1980	23,662	0.6
1985	38,838	1.0
1990	45,694	1.1
1995	68,279	1.5
2000	119,982	2.5
2004	145,324	2.9
2006	125,000	2.6

Source: Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Vital Statistics Reports.

Furthermore, the grounds for divorce cited by both women and men have become more complex. There are two different methods of divorce in Korea; one is divorce by agreement and the other is through the court. In Korean divorce law, when both parties agree to divorce, they only need to complete the form and to attend the family court. On the other hand, when both parties cannot agree to the divorce, the only option is through a 'divorce suit', where an irretrievable breakdown of marriage has to be proved. Divorce on the grounds of an irretrievable breakdown of marriage must fit one of six categories. They are: adultery (1st); desertion (2nd); unreasonable treatment by partner or partner's family (3rd); partner's unreasonable treatment of his or her lineal antecedents (4th); missing or presumed dead for more than three years (5th); other (6th). The partner who is deemed 'guilty' of being responsible for the marital problems is not generally allowed to initiate divorce proceedings, but since 1990 this has been possible if those deemed 'guilty' provide satisfactory reasons for their behaviour (Kwack Bae Hee, 2002). Unlike the system in most Western countries, there is no no-fault divorce in Korea. For example, in the U.K, the Divorce Reform Act of 1969 removed the legal category of 'innocence' or 'guilt' from the legal proceedings (Allan and Crow, 2001: 122).

I will explore the emerging and changing grounds for divorce cited by both women and men , both through divorce by agreement and by divorce suit. The legal grounds for divorce do not necessarily correspond to people’s real reasons for divorce. Therefore, Allan and Crow suggest that it is very important to distinguish the grounds from the reasons, because formal legal categories cannot grasp the complex motives people have to end their marriage (2001: 124). The statistics based on the cited legal grounds for divorce can only show which categories are cited with more or less frequency at different times in Korea.

Before 2000, certain categories, for instance, incompatibility, adultery, abuse and family problems, were not considered separately, but were all categorised as ‘couple problems’. Therefore, before 2000, it is only possible to see that ‘couple problems’ increased from 64.2% in 1975 to 80.2% in 1999 (Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Vital Statistics Report, 2000). Since 2000, as is shown in Table 2, divorce on the grounds of ‘incompatibility of personality’ and ‘economic problems’, have risen whilst ‘family problems’ have decreased. The most frequently cited ground for divorce is ‘incompatibility of personality’. The increase in the use of this category is the starting point for the theoretical exploration of changing intimate relationships in Korea (see section 5 and 6).

Table 2. Grounds for Divorce by Agreement

	Incompatibility of personality	Adultery	Psychological and physical abuse	Family problems	Health problems	Economic problems	Unclassified
2000	40.1	8.1	4.3	21.9	0.9	10.7	14.0
2001	43.0	8.7	4.7	17.6	0.7	11.6	13.7
2002	44.7	8.6	4.8	14.4	0.6	13.6	13.3
2003	45.3	7.4	4.3	13.0	0.6	16.4	13.0
2004	49.4	7.0	4.2	10.0	0.6	14.7	14.1

Source: Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Vital Statistics Report in 2005.

In the case of ‘divorce suits’, wherein there is no agreement and the couple

goes to court, from 1983 to 1991, both women's and men's major grounds were 'adultery' (see Table 3 below). Strikingly, for women, the third category, which is based on unreasonable treatment by partner or partner's family¹, has dramatically increased from 8.1% in 1983 to 23.4% in 1991 and the sixth miscellaneous category from 4.3% to 9.9% over the same period. These trends continue, according to the Korea National Statistical Office, in 2006: more men file for divorce based on the first and the second category, whilst for women the main grounds for divorce are based on the first and third categories (Korea National Statistical Office, 2007).

Table 3. Grounds of Divorce Suit (%)

Grounds for Divorce	1st Adultery	2nd Desertion	3rd Unreasonable treatment by partner or partners' family	4th Partner's unreasonable treatment of his or her lineal antecedents	5th Missing, presumed dead for more than three years	6th ² Other	Total
Men (1983)	52.8	23.7	3.7	4.3	9.4	6.1	100.0
Men (1991)	48.6	20.7	8.3	5.5	7.2	9.7	100.0
Women (1983)	42.4	20.2	8.1	19.3	5.7	4.3	100.0
Women (1991)	40.2	14.9	23.4	5.3	6.3	9.9	100.0

Source: Judicial Yearbook from 1984 to 1992 from the Office of Court Administration cited in Kim Soon Ok, 1994: 158.

Although the sixth category, 'other', is not the most often cited ground for divorce, the increasing use of this category is regarded as a reflection of the increase of 'intimate troubles' as reasons for divorce for many men and women. The increase of women's and men's use of the sixth category for their

-
1. This often includes the partner's physical and emotional abuse.
 2. 'Breakdown of the marriage' due to any other irreparable circumstances not accounted for in any of the five categories.

grounds for divorce is also shown in the research conducted by the 'Korea Legal Aid Centre for Family Relations', which has counselled people who want a divorce since 1956. Based on the reasons for divorce given during this counselling, since 1990, the sixth category has included the main issues that women and men have cited, such as the increase of communication problems, loveless relationships and incompatibility of personality (Kwack Bae Hee, 2002) (see Table 4).

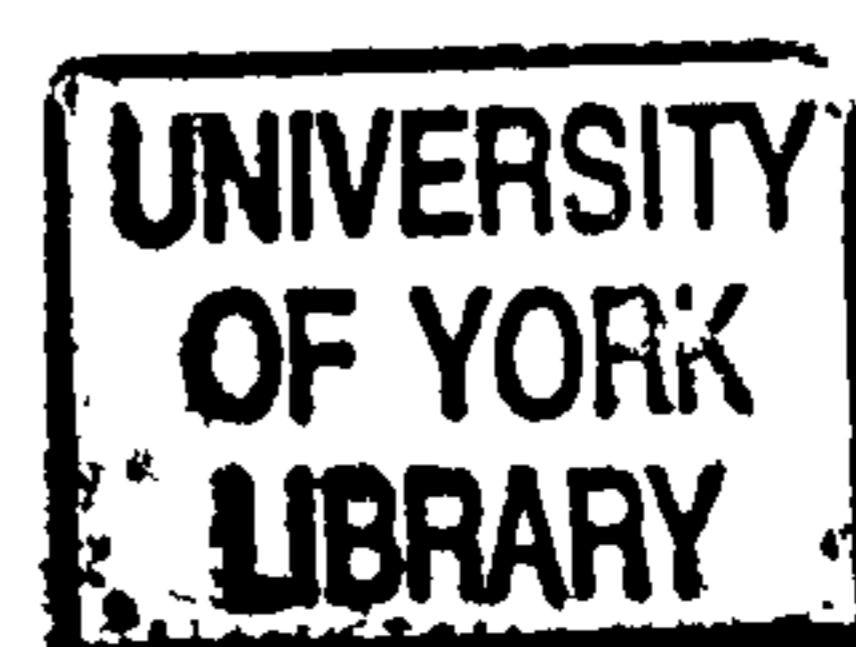
Table 4. Grounds for Divorce Counselling from 1990 to 1999

Grounds for Divorce	1st Adultery	2nd Desertion	3rd Unreasonable treatment by partner or partners family	4th Partner's unreasonable treatment of his or her lineal antecedents	5th Missing, presumed dead for more than three years	6th Other	Unknown	Total Number of Divorce Counseling
Women	20.0	6.8	33.5	0.2	0.6	37.9	1.0	38.628
Men	14.3	29.0	7.0	0.6	1.3	45.2	2.6	6.762

Source: Kwack Bae Hee, 2002: 93

In recent research from the 'Korea Legal Aid Centre for Family Relations' based on data collected from 1956 to 2006, during the 1950s and 1960s, men's adultery and women's problems with men's extended family were women's major reasons to consider divorce, whilst for men, the 6th category as well as adultery and desertion were the main reasons during the same period. But since 1980, for women, the 6th category and men's violence, have become the most cited, whilst for men, women's adultery and abandonment (desertion) were the main issues. After 2000, both women's and men's major reasons to consider divorce were the 6th category. In 2007, incompatibility of personality, which is treated as belonging to 6th category, was the most cited reason for both women (36.1%) and men (59.5%) (Korea Legal Aid Centre for Family Relations, 2008).

The fact that marital couples' problems, especially 'incompatibility of personality' has become the most commonly cited reasons for divorce has



brought about theoretical debates about the changing nature of family and couple relationships. In order to understand the debate around changed family/ marital relationships, one needs to consider the cultural and social changes that have occurred since the end of the 1980s. At the heart of these changes, it is also argued, lie women's changed status in society.

3. Cultural and Social Impacts on Women's Lives

Since the late 1980s, the women's social movement emerged alongside the general democratic movement against the totalitarian government, demanding social justice and equality in both public and private spheres (Lee Hyo Jea, 1996). After the end of the dictatorial military regime in 1987, women's and men's different gendered responsibilities, and the social belief that a woman's place is in the home, became contested issues (Kendall, 1996). Before this political and cultural movement, society was regarded as one big 'family', comprised of many 'small' male-headed families, for which people were forced to sacrifice their individual interests. Within the new political and cultural movement in late 1980s, the voices of minority groups, including women, began to be heard in public (Cho Han Hae Joang, 1998). What was previously defined as 'private', such as issues of sexuality and intimacy, also became increasingly politicized around this period (Kim Hyun Mee, 2001).

Since 1990s, women have been accessing higher education in dramatically increasing numbers, and the increase in higher education for women is seen as another reason for women becoming more aware about their status in private and in public. In 1970, the percentage of women who had received a higher education was 25.3% (Korea National Statistical Office, 2002). However, by 2003, as shown in Table 5, the rate had increased dramatically to 77.5%, which almost equalled the 81% of men in higher education (Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Report on the vital Statistics in 2004).

Table 5. Trends in Educational Attainment*

Year	% men educated beyond secondary education	% women educated beyond secondary education
1990	33.9	32.4
1995	52.9	49.8
2000	70.4	65.4
2003	81.0	77.5

*The rate of women's and men's higher education is based on the numbers among people who graduated high school each year.

Source: Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Vital Statistics Report in 2004.

Furthermore, the wider family network and women's submissive roles at home have been changing with the new laws which proclaimed women's equality. The Sexual Equality Employment Act came into force in 1987. 'The Act contains the principle of equal pay for equal work, maternity protection, and the concept of the right to continue employment after marriage and childbirth' (Roh Mi Hye, 1994: 252-3). The New Family Law, which allows women rights to family property, was also instituted in 1990 (Lee Hyo Jea, 1996). Prior to this, married women had no legal rights to marital property. The New Family Law holds that property accumulated during the marriage can be divided between the spouses and that women can claim custody rights when there is no resolution regarding child custody after the divorce. Before the New Family Law, if custody could not be agreed upon, by law, only men had the parental right to look after the children.

In the context of these changing social realities, many studies of divorce in Korea connect the rising divorce rate with the individualization of women who then gain greater equality and independence in marital lives. This is, in part, attributed to Westernization, which, it is argued, provokes the instability of marital and intimate relationships. Kim Jeong Ok and Park Kyung Kyu (1993), for example, argue that gender equality in general, and women's economic independence in particular, has caused the current 'instability' in marital relationships. Such views follow Giddens' analysis of changing intimate

relationships, linking divorce with fragile, individualised and equalised forms of intimate relationships.

In Western social thought, the idea of individualization (Beck, 1992, 1995) and individual 'projects of the self' (Giddens, 1992) have been central to accounts of changing patterns of intimacy. In the next section, the individualization thesis will be treated critically in the light of, first, feminist critiques of Giddens and Beck. These critiques highlight gender inequality in marriage and the power relationships embedded in gendered family practice. Secondly, account needs to be taken of the specificity of Korean culture and history, in which individualization is a much newer idea than in the West, so that family cultures and the preservation of certain traditions may be very important for the exercise of relational or contextual choice in marriage and in divorce.

4. Western Debates about Intimacy and Gender Relationships

Many writers in the West argue that the ties that bind people in family relationships are increasingly contingent. The perceived significance of change in gendered attitudes to work and family has generated arguments about increasing individualization in couple relationships, which is directly linked to the core reasons for divorce. Beck states that the increasing rate of divorce reflects 'the *fragility of marital and family support*' (Beck, 1992: 111, italics in original), highlighting the extent to which 'people are being removed from the constraints of gender' (1992: 105). Giddens suggests that women's high rate of initiating divorce can limit the ability of the husband to impose his domination and can thereby 'contribute to the translation of coercive power into egalitarian communication' (1992: 190-191). Egalitarianism has become a key issue which can allow people to pursue their individual satisfaction and justify their decision to divorce. This view resonates with broader changes in intimate life in contemporary societies where love and sex have become crucial factors in individual satisfaction (Weeks, et al., 1999: 85). According to Weeks

et al. (1999: 91), individual satisfaction in the sphere of intimacy highlights the quest for egalitarian relationships, 'the changing role of women and the "transformation of intimacy"'. The soaring divorce rate reinforces the view that commitment has increasingly become a matter of individual choice in the West (Weeks, et al., 1999). Giddens states that marriage for many has increasingly moved towards the form of a pure relationship which equates 'relationship', with people's emotional tie to another person (1992: 58).

According to Giddens, a pure relationship:

has nothing to do with sexual purity, and is a limiting concept rather than only a descriptive one. It refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it...Marriage – for many, but by no means all groups in the population – has veered increasingly towards the form of a pure relationship, with many ensuing consequences (Giddens, 1992: 58) .

To explain the 'separating and divorcing society' of today, Giddens suggests that the current trend can influence the effect of the emergence of confluent love which is the condition of 'equality' to share 'emotional give and take' (Giddens 1992; Smart and Neale, 1999: 138-9). The trend towards confluent love result in the pursuit of a 'special relationship' rather than 'a special person' (Giddens, 1992: 62). Thus, people are becoming more aware of the kinds of personal relationships they want and thus individuals can be 'justified in terminating an inadequate relationship' (Smart and Neale, 1999: 137). According to Giddens, a person's life is no longer situated within 'pre-existing patterns and habits' and 'life-style choice are constitutive of the reflexive narrative of self' (Giddens, 1992: 74-75). According to Jamieson, Giddens' view holds that 'greater self-awareness heightens the need for self-affirming connections with others and makes possible new depths of knowing and understanding' (Jamieson, 1998: 37). One of its consequences, using Beck's phrase, is 'free love and free divorce' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The

'old' model that was based on being tied to one another has changed and the more common belief is now that it is better to end a marriage if you cannot endure it.

According to Beck and Beck-Gersheim (1995: 96), the old model which was based on 'traditional rules of ascription' to bind family ties, has been changed to 'the laws of choice and personal inclination'. In their view, the frequency of divorce is related to high expectations of marriage that cannot be satisfied in reality. Giddens (1992) insists that the growing diversity of people's lives is linked to the common trend of individualization which gives more freedom and choice in personal life. In a similar manner, Stacey (1996: 50) discusses the meaning of 'family' to analyze how the family has become more diverse, noting that there is no longer a single culturally dominant family pattern which is 'one male-dominant form of domestic life', noting 'patriarchal crisis' in the postmodern family. Whilst Giddens considers the 'transformation of intimacy' to be a great result of the gender order, Stacey embraces the diversity of family models 'in the name of democracy' (Hochschild, 2003: 163). Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gersheim suggest that intimacy is one of 'the implications of the revolution in romantic relationships' (Bornat, et al., 1999: 115). They also regard intimacy as 'the centre of meaningful personal life in contemporary societies' in which women have attained more individual rights and equality in their relationships with men (Jamieson, 1998: 1).

From their perspective, equality is the central issue in analyses of individual choices about family and marriage. They argue that intimacy and love determine the choices people make about meeting and parting. According to Smart and Neale, like Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gersheim point to the instability of marriage and 'the family', in relation to 'all other changes' which are connected in late modernity, and stress particularly the issue of love (Smart and Neale, 1999: 14). According to Giddens, autonomy is the main aspect of the reflexive project of self and can be considered in an 'egalitarian way' as opposed to the understanding of people's needs and interdependence in family

life (Smart and Neale, 1999: 140). This condition is then closely related to his accounts of the present 'separative and divorcing society' and his principle of autonomy (Smart and Neale, 1999: 140).

Even in the West, however, the portrayal of the couple as an increasingly 'symmetrical' and humane relationship between intimate equals continues to be debated. While there can be no doubt that family patterns, household structures and intimate relationships are indeed changing, do we need to regard such changes as representing a 'decline of the family' or as a move towards 'emotional and equal couple relationships' and as an indication of the trend towards individualization?

Many Western theorists argue that analyses of changing marital relationships and stories of intimacy are further complicated by social factors, such as class, education or social status. Therefore, 'intimacy remains a great deal more complicated than most claims to mutual knowing and understanding' (Jamieson, 1998: 161). These factors are, however, largely ignored by Giddens. Although Giddens' explanation may reflect one element in changes to heterosexual relationships, various studies suggest that gendered inequalities still remain an important dimension of heterosexual intimacy (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Jackson and Scott, 1997; Jackson, 1999; Jamieson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999). Furthermore, as Smart and Neale (1999) state, Giddens neglects how family is a crucial aspect in heterosexual intimacy and also the differences between marriage and other forms of personal relationships. Family cannot be neglected in considering personal life, as it brings various realities interconnected with cultural and social aspects.

Jamieson states that there are negative and positive views of the 'postmodern period' (1998: 19). She argues that the negative aspect relates to loss of family value and lack of commitment, which is promoted through mass culture as well as social and academic understandings of the developing meaning of individualization and self-isolating relationships. The positive factors relate to

emotional or disclosing intimacy as the basis of 'a good relationship' which is not only possible in marriage but is widely applicable in any forms of personal relationships (Jamieson, 1998: 19). Although in Korea postmodernism is not understood in the same way, similar discourses are heard in both public and academic areas in Korea. I shall first discuss the negative views of changing marital relationships and consequences of divorce and subsequently move on to the positive view. I will go on to explore how debates on individualization and Westernization in Korea are critically understood, and how Korean debates on the increasing divorce rate have been influenced by Western theorists – especially Giddens and Beck.

5. The Decline of Family Values?

In the story of divorce in Korea, the word 'individual' opens a window on a complicated panorama. The public gaze has focused on the fragility of family relationships, and the dark side of modernity, highlighting liberal attitudes to sexual life outside marriage. Fragile love and intimacy are often linked to relationships outside marriage, along with the promotion of mass consumer culture. The public and media focus on adultery is often seen as a gendered issue, as is evidenced by the newspaper title 'There is another man's fragrance on my wife'. The article explains that married women do not believe in the lifetime commitment of marriage, and feel that they can get divorced, remarry or be alone whenever they wish (Jo Wan Je, 2005). Also, the increase in the proportion of divorces initiated by women is used as 'proof' of women's individualization: 'Women are the ones who make their individual choice to divorce because of their dissatisfaction and self-interest...' (Yoo Byoung Seok, 2004).

The general judgements made about women's motives for divorcing and the reasons they cite are framed within social and public discourses of women's lack of commitment and the decline of family values. Lee Young-Hee, a family

conflict mediator from the Seoul Family Court who has worked for more than ten years in the area, insists that there are divorces which can be justified in terms of human rights, where women need to be protected from their husbands if they are violent and/or alcoholic (Lee Young Hee, 2004). Lee suggests that in these cases 'weak women' need to be protected from the 'social devil' that is violence and alcoholism. However, when it comes to other reasons for divorce, she clearly categorizes these cases as 'impulse divorces' or 'quickie divorces' which she links with women's lack of patience and unwillingness to make personal sacrifices (Lee Young Hee, 2004).

Generally held views about what is possible or which reasons for divorce are regarded as 'selfish' become more evident when women with dependent children divorce. It is seen as selfish for women to consider their own interests without prioritising the fact that they have children. Here, women are seen as the central cause of the problems arising from divorce. Kim Sung-Hee argues that women used to endure their marital dissatisfaction and that they used to sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of their children. She claims that their self-centredness has caused the soaring divorce rate and the concomitant abandonment of children, child poverty and increase in the number of single parents (Kim Sung Hee, 2003). Kim Sung Hee cites the recent survey results from a Korea Legal Aid Centre study in 2002 in which women over 18 were asked 'Who should take care of children after divorce?'. In the survey, 36% of women answered that 'anyone who could' should take care of children. Only 29% of women said that it was mothers who should be responsible for child-care (Jeoun Jin Bae, 2002, cited in Kim Sung Hee, 2003). Kim Sung Hee (2003) notes that women clearly believe that they are less responsible for children than their mothers were, concluding that this represents the 'destruction' of maternity. Kim Sung Hee calls this new trend 'individualization' and ascribes it to women's self-centredness and self-interest. This, Kim Sung Hee, argues, is the main cause of divorce in contemporary society. Kim Sung Hee suggests that, in order to prevent

divorce, university students should be educated on ways in which they can prevent self-centred attitudes that cause divorce (Kim Sung Hee, 2003).

Women's dissatisfaction in marriage and the family has been also linked to their increased expectations of family life. According to the Korean Research Centre, which surveyed 1100 married men and women in Korea in 1999, 80% of husbands responded that they were 'satisfied' compared to only 52% of the wives. Among them, 24% of husbands said they were 'very satisfied' but only 13% of the wives. The rate of dissatisfaction amongst husbands is 18% while 38% of wives are dissatisfied (Noh Ik Sang, 2000).

However, women's dissatisfaction with family life is not a new trend originating from their higher expectations. Rather, it can be explained by considering the history of women's position in the family, particularly by comparing their position with that of men. Research on 901 women in 1968 focused on their family life and revealed similar dissatisfaction among women even though they did not consider the possibility of divorce. Just over 50% of wives claimed that they were satisfied, while 35% of women over thirty said that they were satisfied and only 26% of wives in their forties. The desire to have a good relationship with a husband and the low satisfaction with marriage are highlighted by women's responses to the question: 'If you were not married yet, would you want to get married?' Only 40% of women living in cities and 26% of those in rural areas answered 'yes'. However, even though the rate of marital satisfaction was low, over 70% of women never thought about divorce at the time of the survey and only 28% of women thought about it 'sometimes' (Lee Tai Hyun, 1968: 997-998).

It is thus clear that women's dissatisfaction is not a new trend and that comparing data over time can support the position that women no longer feel that they have to endure dissatisfaction in their marriages. However, rather than understanding divorce in terms of the simple moral judgement that divorce is bad and commitment is good, it is necessary to interrogate how

family commitment affects women, and also whether divorce itself is indeed evidence of lack of commitment and self-centredness. The way that changing views of marriage and ideals of family relationships cause tension and lead to women's increased gendered burden in society need to be examined. Negative public opinion about divorce does not consider the ways in which women construct meaning and negotiate their daily lives before deciding to divorce, and overlooks the more intricate details of women's lives.

While the public and some academics regard individualization as a negative phenomenon, other theorists interpret it as a positive process that reflects changing cultural trends in Korea. In analyzing women's changed desire to have companionate, satisfying emotional relationships in the context of modernization and democratisation, some theorists emphasise the positive aspects of individualization and changes in family life. Among some feminists, these views are also taken as the sign of tension between traditional family-centred life and women's desire for equality and companionship in marriage.

6. Changing Intimate Relationships

Many theorists suggest that family forms have become more diverse because of the soaring divorce rate and increasing numbers of people remaining single. These theorists suggest that family relationships, based on the patriarchal system, have changed to become companionate marriage relationships that are more equal and emotionally reciprocal (Lee Dong Won, 1997; Kim Jeong Ok and Park Kyung Kyu, 1993; Lee Hyun Song, 1999). They argue that, since 1990, the main basis for maintaining a couple's relationship has been the equality and stability of the couple, rather than other kinship networks. Intimate troubles between spouses have become the main reason for divorce: loveless relationships and incompatibility of personality are increasingly the reasons people use in claiming marital instability and justifying divorce. Lee Hyun Song (1999) suggests that if couples feel that they do not get enough

'compensation' (understood here as 'personal reward or satisfaction') from their marriage, they will decide to file for divorce. Divorce is regarded as the main means through which family problems are resolved in the context of modernization and Westernization (Han Kyoung Hea, et al., 2003).

A couple's emotional love has become more important as a result of women's independence, the women's movement, women's improved social position, and the increased consciousness of self-worth (Kim Sang Yong, 1996; Seo Soo Kyung, 2002). Women's personal happiness and pursuit of a better life have become more important than making sacrifices for the family. Seo Soo Kyung (2002) argues that, as in Western society, married couples can no longer take for granted that they will live together forever. Theories that emphasise the process of women's individualization are often linked to discourses of gender equality, which, in turn, consider the gendered meaning of individual choices in relation to 'divorce'. Also, women's raised awareness and their pursuit of better lives in an attempt to resolve marital problems is seen as a positive phenomenon, producing companionate marital relationships.

These theorists focus on individualization and Westernization as social trends that lead to a greater equality between women and men in marriage, and they regard this as the basis of understanding the increasing divorce rate in Korea. These views are strongly influenced by Giddens (1992), Beck (1992) and Beck-Gernsheim (1995). In this context, the phrase, 'transformation of intimacy' has started to be used in Korea. Intimacy is used to describe the changing meaning of marital relationships and also changes to people's personal lives, such as the increase in the number of people remaining single, and love being seen as the main purpose of couple relationships. The term, 'intimacy' has been influenced by Giddens' and Beck's understandings which emphasise fragility and disclosing or sharing in couple relationships. Seo Soo Kyung (2002) focuses on the 'postmodern' variety of family forms rather than on one powerful nuclear model. The main aim of postmodern life, Seo Soo Kyung argues, is to make one's own life better, and the most important factor

in a married couple's ability to maintain their relationship and reach self-realization is to keep their intimate relationship.

Ham In Hee (2001) describes the present trend as a 'romantic revolution' or 'Intimacy Revolution'. According to her, this trend is linked to the loss of stability which used to exist in traditional lives that were centred on communities and villages (see also, Lee Dong Won, et al., 1998). The modern family no longer provides strong social bonds and structural support that can provide rules for individuals to follow. Ham In Hee uses Giddens' ideas and argues that, with more personal choices available, the basis of stability has gone and love is the last remaining shelter for people's own self identity. In modern society, love has therefore become the determining factor in the decision to continue to live together or get married.

The meaning of intimacy for Korean theorists, following Giddens, is evident in Ham In Hee's (2004) view about 'romanticized marriage' from children-centred life to couple-centred life, revealing more desire for sexual and emotional relationships. Therefore, she suggests that in order to obtain equal marital life, 'couple culture' needs to be distanced from child-centred family life and as Giddens suggests, 'couple culture' requires daily education for democracy and confluent love in marriage. Therefore, Ham In Hee states that Giddens' theory of the transformation of intimacy is the basis of understanding the emerging couple-centred life in Korea. This changing relationship is argued to be the basis of the increase in divorce since the 1990s (Ham In Hee, 2004). The changing significance of choice of marital partner based on love and a freer individual life is the starting point of an examination of how the family model has diversified.

The interesting points within the debate on intimacy is that the term, intimacy, has a different significance in the Korean context. Whereas Giddens sees confluent love as replacing romantic love, in Korea, transformation of intimacy is understood as bringing in romantic love, distanced from patriarchal extended

family life. In Korea, Giddens' theory of 'transformation of intimacy' is used to discuss changes from family centred life to couple centred life and also from deep family involvement in choice of marital partner to more individual choices based on love (see chapter 3). Also, when Korean theorists use the term 'intimacy', they use the term more in order to understand the young generation's life style and their new understanding of marriage, pre-marital sexual relationships and couples' sexual relationships in marriage (Ham In Hee, 2004; Lee Sung Eun, 2006).

The changing desire for couple centred 'nuclear' marital relationships, nevertheless, constitutes the backdrop to analyses of the soaring rate of divorce and the fragility and instability of married life. Some theorists state that intimacy and love have become signs of resistance to the patriarchal family system. They emphasize a positive view of marital changes, which have improved women's life in marriage, as sharing and communication between women and men have become the main purpose of intimate relationships. Even though these positions reflect changed marital life in reality, they lack an understanding of how traditional gendered lives and modernized forms of intimate relationships entwine in relation to men's and women's desire for love and couple centred life in marriage. Intimacy and couple centred life is used to understand the gendered nature of personal life, but personal life involves not only the satisfaction of the interests of the individual but also the expectations of intimate relationships that are both individual and embedded within 'wider social structures' (Lewis, 2001: 15).

Therefore, the the transformation of intimacy from family centered life to couple centered life and the desire for love in the Korean context should be understood within daily practices of heterosexual marital relationships. It needs to expand beyond 'a very specific sort of knowing, loving and "being close to" another person' (Jamieson, 1998: 1). Women's and men's experience in marriage and loving relationships should be located within 'an understanding of the different forms of marriages, relationships and intimacies which are to

be found in diverse and complex societies' (Smart and Shipman, 2004: 494). In what follows, I shall discuss how cultural and social formation shapes women's and men's different gendered responsibilities in order to give the basis of understanding heterosexual intimacy in Korea.

7. Gendered Lives in Korea

In order to understand heterosexual marriage, it is necessary to see how marriage continues to be a normalized and idealized form of adult life, even though certain social stories about marriage imply that it has become more 'free'. Morgan states that people now have more freedom to decide 'whom one might marry', but 'the extent to which a person chooses not to marry is not, by comparison, as "free", but rather more complex' (1992: 14). Morgan stresses that there is 'the paradox of choice' existing in marriage relationships 'where almost everyone is "choosing" marriage or a marriage-type relationship' (1992: 17). And this is clearly the case in South Korea even though people do not explicitly state that marriage is an obligation which they cannot refuse, as found in Park Min Ja's research.

According to Park Min Ja's research (2003), the percentage of Korean people who were intending to get married was 90% in both men and women in 1960, but in 1990, the rate had fallen sharply to 50% in both cases. The percentage of people who considered marriage as an unavoidable and an inescapable part of the life course in 1970 was 81.7% in men and 66.6% in women. By 1980 the figure stood at 60% and 30% respectively whilst, by 2000, the figure was 30% for both men and women (Park Min Ja, 2003). However, the reality in South Korea is somewhat more complex. People state that it is not an obligation to marry but this does not mean that people do not have pressure on their marriage. According to a UN report on 'the Worlds' Women' in 1995, in South Korea, the percentage of over 45 year-olds who had never married was 0.3% of women and 0.4% of men, the lowest rate in the world (UN, 1995 cited in Ham

In Hee, 1999: 50). In Kim Hae Syun and Lee Jae Rim's (2004) secondary analysis of 'National Population Research', it also found that among over 35 year-olds, only 4% of men and 2% of women had never been married. The marriage rate does not necessarily mean that people feel obliged to marry, however; it does show that marriage is the normal form of adult life in Korea and is still crucial to heterosexual relationships (see chapter 3). People's choice of marriage is linked to the fact that they consider marriage important in terms of their future safety within a wider social network (Kim Hae Syun and Lee Jae Rim, 2004). In addition to this, women's inequality in society is a crucial factor in understanding the social realities of marriage which cannot be understood only in terms of personal choice (Lewis, 2001: 17).

Women's increased access to higher education and their greater participation in the labour force have frequently been cited as reasons for their individualization. However, one needs to consider these changes in the context of the social inequality that exists between men and women. During the period of industrialization, from the 1960s to the 1980s, women's participation in the manufacturing industry increased from 62,000 in 1960 to a million in the 1980s, yet women received only half of the average wage of men (Lee Hyo Jae, 1996). Despite the increase of women in higher education, as I showed in Table 5, by 2003 the economic participation of women stood at 48.9%, which is almost identical to what it was in 1990 (Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Report on the vital Statistics, 2004).

Table 6. Trends in Workforce Participation

Year	% of population in work (men)	% of population in work (women)
1990	74.0	47.0
1995	76.5	48.3
2000	74.2	48.6
2003	74.6	48.9

Source: Korea National Statistical Office, Annual Vital Statistics Report in 2004.

In addition, in 2005 women were still earning 39% less than men (Lee Hak Ryol, 2005). In 2002, 70 percent of women who were working did not have permanent positions (Byeon Hwa Soon, et al., 2006). College educated women were less likely to work than those without a college education, and their work tended to be temporary rather than career-oriented. In 2003, the percentage of female workers who were professional was 16.9%. Since this figure was around 10% in 1992, it has shown little increase when compared to the rapid growth of education (Korea National Statistical Office, 2004 'Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey' 1992, 2004).

Furthermore, when theorists and the public discuss the fragility and individualized nature of couple relationships and argue that 'incompatibility of personality' is the basis of changing marital relationships, they need to draw on a variety of perspectives of family practices and gendered responsibilities in the family and wider social networks. In order to understand family practice in Korea, women's gendered responsibility can be understood in the context of the meaning of familialism: the view that the basic unit of society is not the individual but the family, and is therefore a key element in understanding marital relationships (Cho Han Hae Joang, 1986). It should not be assumed that 'familialism' implies that the family is crucial to personal relationships, but rather, it highlights different family practices in Korea.

Familialism shapes women's relationships with their husbands' parents, whether they live together or not. A woman thus has caring responsibilities that extend beyond the nuclear family to include her husband's wider family network (Kim Yen Hee, 1995). This means that family histories in Korea differ from those in the West. In the West, couple relationships are influenced by different values and practices. Jamieson argues that in the West 'as the twentieth century proceeded, marriage became highly romanticized'(Jamieson, 1998: 18), and by the mid-twentieth century, intimacy between spouses based on equality, mutuality and deep understanding were given new importance as good family practice: 'Home became a private sanctuary; an appropriate

setting for intense intimacy between its inhabitants' within the popular view of home as the place of a couple of parents and their children (Jamieson, 1998: 18).

In Korea, even though it has become more common for marital couples to live separately from the men's parents, Kim Hae Suk and her colleagues contend that the rise of the nuclear family does not necessarily entail the dissolution of the extended family. On the contrary, various 'family practices' continue to assert the importance of the extended family, such as the practice of sharing money with the husband's parents in addition to women's caring responsibility for the men's parents (Kim Hae Suk, et al., 2005). It also remains common in South Korea for married adult men to provide economic support for their parents (Hong Moon Sik and Byun Yong Chan, 1998: 178).

Given the deep interconnections between women's lives and wider familial relationships, the issue, 'incompatibility of personality' needs to be understood not in terms of individual incompatibility, but rather how women and men understand personality in terms of the social and cultural context. The use of 'incompatibility of personality' as the reason for divorce has been prominent in public debates on the subject. However, these debates have to take into account that the meaning of personality is not about individual character but is constructed within specific familial and social locations (Abelmann, 1997: 790). Also, personality is clearly related to moral judgement on women, as women's 'good personality' is constructed in terms of women's fulfilment of their gendered responsibility at home in Korea (see chapter 3).

Abelmann (1997) conducted research on middle-aged Korean women and she was intrigued to find that these women often talked about their personalities in order to explain why they endured unhappy marriages for the sake of their family and children. It emerged that a woman's personality largely determined the fate of the extended family and whether family members enjoyed harmonious lives. Abelmann notes that women in Korea consider themselves

to be 'the guardians of the home' (1997: 788). These women took responsibility for their caring roles as well as for improving the status of their families. The women linked the fate of other women with their personality traits. For example, they argued that women who earned more than their husbands or had masculine characteristics would have unhappy marriages. They also contended that a stubborn woman or a 'Challan yoja' (a woman who puts on airs) would cause her marriage to fail (Abelmann, 1997: 794-795).

When the women explain that they have 'good personalities', they tend to emphasize their 'traditional' characteristics and how these traits enable them to maintain family harmony and ensure that their children receive a good education (Abelmann, 1997: 793-794). The links women make between personality and gendered responsibility and family status are related to the process of rapid social development in Korea. Whilst the dominant narrative of Korean development has focused on social mobility in terms of men's military narratives, the state, Confucianism, and capitalism, women's narratives about social mobility are related to their belief that 'family fates are in female hands: the roles that women play are critical to the development of family class identification and culture' (Abelmann, 1997: 806). Therefore, Abelmann argues that "personality" was not simply a catalog of personal traits or proclivities but was also a discursive site where the workings of particular family genealogies and even national history were at play' (1997: 787). Rofel also contends that 'gender... is not just "about" women and men' but that 'all structural and discursive components of modernity' work to produce 'specific normalizations of masculinity and femininity' within each national and social space (Rofel, 1999: 20). The development of women's and men's different understanding of ideals of masculinity and femininity parallels social development in Korea. Social emphasis on the improvement of the family and the nation shapes the narratives that link women's gendered responsibilities and rapid social development. During the period of rapid social development in Korea, women connected with the social world by improving the status of their

families, providing good education for their children and dealing with the hands-on pragmatics of stocks, high-interest loans, and real estate (Cho Hae Joang, 2002).

Kendall explains that 'Korean gender typing nearly inverts the Victorian ideal of the lady on the pedestal whose purity of character is preserved in isolation from mundane matters of livelihood' (1996: 218). In addition to women's caring roles, women also share responsibility for economic planning, dealing in real estate and investments (Kendall, 1996: 219). Women's effective pursuit of these various responsibilities is the basis of men's understanding of a good wife. In Kim Hae Syun and Lee Jae Rim's qualitative research on five men and five women over 30 in 2003, men's understanding of a 'good wife' is connected to good cooking, effective money management and saving, and good treatment of men's parents. Also, men talk about their understanding of 'good character' of their wives in terms of performing women's roles and being submissive to men and their parents (Kim Hae Syun and Lee Jae Rim, 2004).

In the context of Korea's rapid economic growth, middle class wives built a highly competitive and status-conscious culture (Lee Jae Kyoung, 2003). In Korea, men's public work-centred life can be attributed to the fact that women have constructed their own identities through their children, and distanced their husbands who are absent most of the time at work. This can partly be explained by Korean men's working hours, which are as high as fifty-two hours per week. This is higher than in Japan, at forty-nine hours, and the United States, at forty-four hours (Kim Choe, et al., 2004: 98). In 2007, Korean people's working hours were the highest among OECD countries (Korea National Statistical Office, 2008).

Men are further distanced from their homes by a culture that regards drinking with colleagues as a part of extended working hours. This culture can be traced back to the influence of Confucian ideology within Korea, which asserts that

'the individual's loyalty and obedience to the group and its leader' are linked to the public world (Mason, et al., 1998: 5). On the other hand, at home this ideology also promotes filial piety, namely, 'the loyalty of sons and their wives to the patrilineal family and the husband's parents' (Mason, et al., 1998: 5). There are Korean terms that reflect the different social locations of women and men in marriage: 'A husband is called "bacatyangban", which means "a person outside (of the home)" and a wife is "ansaram", which means "a person inside (of the home)"' (Yang Sun Geun, 2002: 74). However, the problem is that even when women and men both work, men's work-centred life has not changed. National statistics from 2007 indicate that when women and men both work, the amount of time women dedicated to housework was 6.5 times more than that dedicated by men, who spend 32 minutes on the housework per day. This is only one minute more than men whose wives do not work (Korea National Statistical Office, 2008).

'While men remain at the economy-driven work place, the cultural and emotional distance' between husbands and wives 'continues to grow' (Cho Hea Jeong, 2002: 187). Since the 1990s, there has been an escalating social trend that asserts the belief that in order for women to gain self-realization they have to be 'lovely and sexy women' (Lee Jae Kyoung, 2003; Cho Hae Joang, 2002: 182). Moreover, a married woman who does not take care of her appearance, and does not spend money on herself, is condemned. Cho notes that 'the new patriarchy of consumer capitalism' has given women freedom in a limited way, subjecting her body, however, to the patriarchal gaze, whilst also expecting them to take care of their family and husbands' family (Cho Hae Joang, 2002: 186). Their daily practices are still linked to their traditional roles but their bodies and images have become subjected to modernized assumptions. Women are expected to be strong mothers, diligent wives and sexy women. They are further expected to display sexy bodies to prevent their husbands from straying into adultery. However, within this complicated network of identities, the male role has remained largely unchanged.

Women's increasing gendered responsibilities are also reinforced by social views of what women have to do in marriage. Ham In Hee (1999) analyzed how social assumptions about women's gendered responsibilities have increased through women's mass magazines. Ham In Hee found that before 1980, women's roles at home used to be confined to basic cooking, buying necessities for the home such as cookers, and home decoration. In 1976 there were 33 advertisements that were related to these roles, rising to 99 advertisements in 1980. By 1980 advertisements also focused on women looking for work and articles provided advice for preparing for their children's marriages. Also, since 1990, the issue of women's improvement of their self-image through diet, fitness and body care started to appear in the advertisements, pressurising women to exert self control. Despite these additional expectations, there was no change in women's existing roles as mothers and wives who needed to spend ever more time doing family work (Ham In Hee, 1999). As long as women accept the roles of wives and mothers, they will be responsible for the modernization project and these roles will remain 'naturalized'. This, in turn, constitutes 'cultural models and ideologies that are pervasive throughout the whole of Korean society' (Cho Hea Jeong, 2002: 169).

8. Patriarchal Family System As the Main Basis of Divorce

Modern Korean women are seeking to have more equal relationships with men, and this can be seen by the increasing number of women in higher education and the increasing number of women in employment. However, men are not changing in the same way as the women. Therefore, Cho (2002: 187) calls this phenomenon 'modern woman' and 'feudal man', highlighting women's increasing gendered responsibilities at home. Some feminist theorists emphasize the persistent gender inequality and patriarchal family practices in their analyses of divorce.

Kim Hae Ryeon argues that divorce is not based on individual problems, but is linked to the patriarchal family practices. The home is not a place where both men and women share and do things for the family. Rather, it is 'the palace' where men demand and women meet their requirements (1995: 155). This, according to Kim Hae Ryeon, characterises divorce processes in which men's divorce storytelling focuses more or less on what they expected from their wives while women give more explanation of what they they did for their husband (Kim Hae Ryeon, 1995).

Kwack Bae Hee (2002) argues that, while society and women have changed, men have preserved conservative and patriarchal attitudes and behaviours. She notes that women want equal relationships with men but that men prefer to retain their traditional power over women by remaining the family heads. Jang Jeong Soon (1994) also contends that women's awareness of their situation has changed because of education and their work outside the home, but men still want women to obey them. Hong Mi Young (2002) states that divorce is grounded in women's desire to escape from oppressive relationships and contends that divorce is a form of women's protest against their husbands and the husband's family's patriarchal and unreasonable demands of the daughter-in-law. This perspective sees divorce as a positive practice that provides an escape route from women's suffering. Ahn Gwi Ok (1999, 2004) also explains that divorce requires a lot of courage and bravery, but it can result in the happiness of starting a new life which breaks with the patriarchal system.

For these theorists, the main point is not about the changing nature of marital relationships towards equal, intimate relationships. Rather, they link increased divorce to the social changes that have made divorce a more feasible option for women, as well as the cultural and political women's movements which have raised women's awareness and enabled them to acknowledge their marital dissatisfaction. Crucially, marriage and divorce are analyzed by trying to understand women's lives and by listening to women's voices as they emerge from the patriarchal family system (Lee Jae Kyoung, 2003). These approaches

constitute the basis of some feminist arguments about divorce. Women are regarded as speaking from the context of male-centred families in which women do the domestic and emotional work that keep family life harmonious (Lee Jae Kyoung, 2003).

In a study that demonstrates the gender differences in the divorce process, Lee Jae Kyoung (2000) notes that even though men and women might provide the same reasons for getting divorced, the different interpretations of these reasons tend to reveal the incompatibility of the partners. This is also evident in research from 'Korean Legal Family Aid' who counsel people seeking divorce. This research indicates that the meaning of 'incompatibility of personality' as a ground for divorce is rather different for women and men. Men usually cite 'incompatibility of personality' when they feel that women have not fulfilled their role as submissive wife, who cares for her husband and his family, whilst women emphasise their partners' lack of respect towards women and bad treatment of them (Kwack Bae Hee, 2002: 109).

The generally held view of people citing economic problems as grounds for divorce is also gendered. Park Hea Kyung and Guk Mi Ae (2003) argue that economic problems are not just related to a lack of material wealth but also to attitudes about one's work and the way the money is spent. When husbands lose their jobs, they do not accept their loss of economic power. Thus, when women file for divorce for economic reasons, they do not simply blame their husbands' inability to take care of their family as the main bread-winner. Rather, they accuse them of being lazy and of wasting money, of being insincere and of having a patriarchal attitude to wives. Therefore, women's complaint about their husbands' lack of income is not simply related to the husbands' earning power, but also to the way they spend money and their attitude to managing money (Park Hea Kyung and Guk Mi Ae, 2003).

Although people make a direct connection between the husband's unemployment and the woman's wish for a divorce, the relationship between these events is complex, and they are not directly related. Divorces due to

economic problems need not lead to the conclusion that people divorce very easily because of 'money problems', but rather that divorces are a response to a patriarchal culture, and a male centered view of economic problems.

These theorists analyze divorce by linking it with men's patriarchal attitudes that cause women to be submissive and victimized in marriage. Divorce is thus a form of resistance. These analyses reveal significant differences between men's and women's opinions about divorce. Men mainly attribute divorce to women's work outside the home and to less importance being attached to their family duties. On the other hand, women regard men's patriarchal values and traditional attitudes as the primary reasons for divorce (Kwack Bae Hee, 2002). These theorists mentioned above note that women's education and employment have led them to find their own voices and happiness and they argue that women are not happy in marriage. According to them, this discrepancy between women's modernized education as well as their desire for 'equality' and their traditional family lives leads them to view divorce as an escape route. They thus see divorce as a symptom of a structural problem rather than the outcome of an individual choice. My own research tends to support these arguments that explore divorce in terms of social and cultural inequality. Women's and men's different interpretations of their marriage and divorce has to be linked to their unequal marriage status, as well as 'the patterning of inequalities that exists outside the home', addressing the issue of 'who makes decisions or whose interests are best served' within wider social networks (Allan and Crow, 2001: 90).

9. Summary: Family Work and Intimacy

So far I have discussed ways in which Korean literature on divorce links the increases in the divorce rate to either the existing traditional patriarchal family system or to modernised, changing marital relationships that emphasise intimacy and love. However, there is a lack of research exploring how the

traditional gendered division is interconnected with men's and women's understanding and practices of intimacy and love. Furthermore, it is not enough to state that the traditional family system is still the same in Korean society as the changing expectations of intimacy and love have impacted on women's and men's different gendered understandings of femininity and masculinity in marriage in complex ways.

Many Korean theorists analyse divorce by using a Western theory of individualization. This, however, paints an incomplete picture of the reality of divorce in Korea as it ignores many aspects of the multidimensional ways in which people are actually living family life. While there is some recognition of the individual factors that come into play when people choose a marital partner or divorce, more attention needs to be given to the ways in which individuals and their choices are always embedded in 'history, tradition, biography and relationships' (Smart, 2007: 187). It is also important to explore how women and men are 'gendered individuals' and 'embedded individuals' (Lewis, 2001: 15) within wider social and cultural power relationship, rather than simply viewing people as individuals making more free life choice (see chapter 3). Feminist theorists emphasise that women's increased awareness of unequal relationships and men's patriarchal attitudes may prompt them to end their marriages.

Although feminists and supporters of the Western theories of 'transformation of intimacy' or 'individualization' offer different accounts of gender/intimate relationships and divorce trends in Korea, they both see traditional, patriarchal marriages as the binary opposite of the ideal of equal, intimate or companionate modern heterosexual marriage. In reality, however, women's and men's desires/expectations in marriage and their intimate marital relationships do not neatly correspond to simplified binaries such as tradition/modernity, dependence/independence and equality/inequality, but, as I shall argue throughout this thesis, are part of 'doing family' or 'doing heterosexual intimacy' within the complex web of personal, social and moral relationships

(Morgan, 1996; Smart, 2007).

Women's and men's different locations in the wider social and cultural network brings deep attention to the ways in which family is located within cultural contexts and how this leads to different meanings being attached to heterosexual marriage and divorce in different cultures (Lewis, 2001). When trying to understand family, the key issue is thus not what family is, but '*how* meaning is attached to objects and events, emphasizing the available categories and practical reasoning by which the familial is derived' (Gubrium and Holstein, 1993: 78, italics in original). This is the basis for exploring family as doing or as practices that make intimate relationships work within the wider web of relationships (Morgan, 1996; Smart, 2007).

To understand doing family work, we need to focus more closely on everyday life and intimate practices (Jamieson, 1998). Therefore, I will follow Finch and Mason's (1993) theory that there are various negotiations that make up 'sets of commitment' and I regard this as a crucial aspect of the differences between men's and women's ways of 'doing family work'. Even though there are cultural differences between Korea and the West, Finch and Mason's argument that one needs to consider the daily practices in which men and women engage to maintain their commitments and relationships is also relevant to the Korean context.

Similarly, Smart talks about relationality to describe the way in which 'people [exist] within intentional, thoughtful networks which they actively sustain, maintain or allow to atrophy' (2007: 48). This 'relationality' is crucial for understanding marriage as well as women's decision to divorce and the process of divorce as such. Smart (2000) describes the divorce process as traversing 'new moral terrain and family practices' and she notes that there are different dimensions to divorce in different cultures. Her arguments are useful when considering how individuals make repeated efforts to make 'the right decisions' in relation to others, both during the divorce process and afterwards

(see chapter 7 and 8). Men and women have different responsibilities in marriage and these responsibilities differ according to their social and cultural locations. They occupy unequal positions in wider social and power networks and all these factors contribute to the moral negotiations women make when they divorce. In other words, these daily negotiations cannot be regarded as simply individual or lifestyle choices; nor are they structural outcomes (Williams, 2004: 41).

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCHING MEN AND WOMEN: REFLECTIONS ON POWER, VALIDITY AND GENDER

1. Introduction

Divorce, particularly the threat it poses to the family, has been the subject of a great deal of media and political attention. This study was inspired by a desire to research the gendered differences between women's and men's narratives of divorce and to explore how their diverse accounts are located in specific social, cultural and political contexts.

I chose a qualitative method and conducted in-depth interviews with male and female divorcees. This decision resulted from my desire to analyze detailed gendered accounts of intimate relationships, marriage and divorce while also considering the impact of politics and social discourses on divorced individuals. I thus follow Riessman's contention that 'divorce narratives... would have been 'impossible to interpret without reference to social discourses and politics, specifically, the transformations in marriage and gender relations' in society (1993: 21).

The search for general 'truths' about the reasons for divorce in Korea has often been based on statistics and has tended to eclipse any quest for understanding of diversity or individual experiences while also neglecting gendered daily practices. Qualitative research can address 'the elements of the social by asking people to talk, and to gather or construct knowledge by listening to and interpreting what they say and to how they say it' (Mason, 2002: 225). The exploration of personal narratives about people's intimate lives, in particular,

allows the researcher to pay attention to the following questions: 'How do people come to construct their particular stories?' or 'Why do they tell this particular kind of story rather than another?' (Plummer, 1995: 24-25).

Since the teller's subjective experience is 'reflexively constructed,... and embedded in everyday material practices and social relations' (Jackson, 1998: 60), the researcher needs to focus on 'the interplay of voices from "public" and "private" social words' (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998: 4). That is to say, a comprehensive analysis of divorce narratives should take account of the larger material and social contexts in which gendered experiences of divorces are recounted. It is also crucial to explore people's accounts in the context of their 'moral accounting' of marriage and the decision to divorce; how they describe and locate themselves within family practices; how they 'make sense' of their experiences; what kinds of 'narrative of self' emerge from the accounts they give, in order to find out how women's and men's experience is made sense of through 'socially situated narratives' (Jackson, 1998: 50).

Heaphy and his colleagues (1998: 455) assert that semi-structured interviews can offer a way to explore the changing intricacies of an individual's identity by giving the researcher access to a snapshot of the subject's life and history while also allowing scope for the development of more comprehensive portraits of intimate family life. Feminism has a legacy of emphasizing the diversity of women's experiences and knowledge (Stanley and Wise, 1993). According to DeVault, '[the] understanding of what it means to talk or to listen "as a woman" is based on the concept of "women's standpoint"; the approach does not imply that all women share a single position or perspective, but rather insists on the importance of following out the implications of women's (and others') various locations in socially organized activities' (DeVault, 2002: 89).

I was also interested in interviewing men because their experiences of divorce are often neglected, even though they actively participate in the whole of the divorce process. Harding argues that interviews with men can provide a

valuable resource for understanding how their personal stories and their knowledge are socially located in ways that are comparable to feminist scholarship's explorations of women's diverse locations (1991: 121). Interviews with men can help to break 'the silence surrounding men's subjective experiences and private lives' (Arendell, 1995: 11). Even though there is a general need to analyze the experiences of both women and men, there is a lack of feminist research with a cross-gender emphasis (Williams and Heikes, 1993; Lee, 1997). This study extends existing work by adding gender differences I found in divorce narratives.

In addition to gender being a crucial factor when interpreting women's and men's divorce narratives, gender also plays an important role in the whole of the interview process. The way in which people are recruited and the choice of an interview location are just two examples of decisions in which gender considerations come into play – the issue I address in the next part of this chapter (Section 2). In Section 3, I discuss my own experience of being situated in the interview setting, exploring how I, as a female, divorced, feminist researcher, and being situated in a particular context of listening to divorce stories, negotiated different story-telling (and story-listening) processes between men and women. The ways in which gender differences shape women's and men's stories also emerged during the interview process, and I explore this in terms of the notion of 'narrative validity' or 'narrative truth' in the final part of this chapter (Section 4).

2. The Field

2.1 The Process of Recruiting Interviewees

I will describe the research processes from my first pilot study in the summer of 2005, during which I interviewed 6 individuals, to my field work during the period between November 2005 and March 2006. I interviewed 17 women and

13 men during this time. In my pilot study I interviewed 6 people in order to clarify what themes I could explore and develop in the interviews and I then re-interviewed these subjects during the second stage of my field work in 2006. I accessed other interviewees through my personal networks. I telephoned people I knew and asked them whether they knew others who might be willing to be interviewed. In order to interview people from different social backgrounds and to gain a picture as comprehensive as possible out of their complicated social locations, I recruited people from different educational backgrounds, different occupations and class backgrounds to explore similarities or discrepancies in their narratives of divorce. My networks allowed me to access both working class and middle class people (the former is from my political experience in labour organizations and the latter from my education background in Korea and abroad).

People's reactions to my request to introduce me to divorced women and men reflect social views of divorce. Some people told me that they could easily introduce me to divorced people by commenting, for example, 'divorce is so common so that would be no problem because 50 % of all people are divorced.' At the other extreme were responses such as 'how could I ask a divorced person to agree to an interview? It is such a private matter that people do not want to discuss it with other people. It would be very difficult to find people who would be willing to be interviewed.'

I arrived in Korea in the middle of November, and I was able to start interviewing female participants in early December. Generally, it was not so difficult to recruit women and they were more willing to talk about their lives. It was, however, very difficult to recruit male participants and a month after my first attempt I still had almost no male interviewees. People who knew divorced men were very reluctant to ask them whether they were willing to be interviewed. This can be related to the fact that men are more negative about their divorce experiences (see chapter 8). When people did ask their divorced male friends, their refusals further highlighted this negative attitude to divorce

as two male friends told me that, when they asked their divorced friends, they angrily responded: 'Is it [divorce] something to boast about?' In two cases men's hesitance about discussing their personal stories caused them to refuse to do the interview after agreeing and making an appointment with me. One man explained his sudden refusal as follows: 'I thought that I would do the interview but I can't do it because I don't want my specific private experience to be used to make generalizations about divorce in the rest of society. My divorce explains only my individual experience'. Another man refused because he said that he found it too difficult to go through with the interview we had set up.

In order to recruit interviewees, especially male interviewees, I participated in a 'singles' night'. My friend introduced me to a group that arranged events where single men and women, including divorcees, could meet. At the party, I met one woman with whom I eventually did an interview and she also introduced me to another woman and a man. Apart from the six interviewees I already knew from the pilot study, most of the female interviewees were recruited through snowballing. And more than half of the male participants were introduced by women whom I met for the first time through the interview process. Men were very reluctant to talk about their personal lives, as I will explore further in the section about the meanings that men attached to the interviews. This, together with their tendency to see divorce as a failure, meant that they would only agree to tell me their stories if they felt that they could really trust me when we met. The women I interviewed helped me to establish this trust with the male interviewees they referred to me by telling their male friends: 'I did it but it was all right. Don't worry about it too much. It is not so difficult'.

Without the help of these women and of the male participants who introduced other men after their own interviews, it would have been very difficult to find male interviewees for my research. The participants noted that they helped me recruit men through persuasion and by telephoning their divorced male friends

because they agreed that it was important to conduct research about divorce and to provide better understandings of divorce, which continues to be regarded as problematic in South Korea. There was also a general belief that academic research about divorce would be more detailed and reliable than the brief reports that are offered in newspapers and on television broadcasts and this perception contributed to people's agreement to be interviewed. One man said 'If you were doing an interview for a television broadcast I would not have wanted to do it because television treats divorce in a very limited way and uses it as a gossip topic. I heard that you are writing your dissertation about divorce and I agreed to be interviewed' (Hee-Tae). During the interview process I thus found that people have more trust in and positive attitudes about academic analyses of divorce because they did not see me as an outsider who wanted to explore their lives for my own personal interest or gain. My 'maturity' was another important issue that influenced people's decision to agree to interviews. My age and my experience of divorce made people more likely to agree. I asked one man who referred his male friend for an interview whether he had told his friend that I was divorced and he responded that he did: 'How can you interview someone about divorce if you have not been through it?'

Even though divorce is common among all age groups, I focus on people in their 30s and 40s since they have been influenced the most by the recent cultural and political changes in South Korea. The respondents ranged in age from 32 to 48: 13 participants were over 40 while 17 were under 40. Five women graduated from high school and 12 women were educated beyond high school. Eight men graduated from high school, one man was educated to the level of middle school and 4 men had tertiary education. I tried to recruit people from diverse educational backgrounds and employment status. I also attempted to recruit women who were housewives and those who worked outside the home as well as women with and without children in order to explore differences in their narratives of divorce. Twenty-one respondents

divorced in the early 2000s and most of the other interviewees divorced in the late 1990s.

Most of the participants were not divorced within the few years preceding the interviews. The latest divorce was early in 2005. In Arendell's (1995) research on divorce, she did not include people who divorced within the preceding two years because people suffer a great deal of pain during the two years following divorce. Psychological distress could thus mean that such people may be likely to tell very different stories than people whose divorces are in the more distant past. Even though I did not exclude people who divorced within the preceding two years, some people did note that they would not have been able to participate in an interview if their divorces had been more recent. This reflects that they needed time before their voices and narratives of divorce could become audible to others. However, the three interviewees who made these comments were all men. They all made similar points to men who said: 'If I had been interviewed a few years ago, the interview would just have been about my side rather than my wife's side'. The men also told me that they would have been too emotional to tell their stories earlier. This reflects the extent to which men are more likely to view an interview as a vehicle of rational or unbiased truth as well as their greater reluctance to express their emotions to others. During the interviews some of the men said: 'I feel like I am just talking about my side and you have to consider that'.

Practical issues I encounter in order to recruit male participants highlight how cross-gender interview involves various difficulties and needs different awareness in the field. This is also related to the process to finding a place to conduct the interviews.

2.2 The Interview Location

It was a challenge to find a safe and comfortable place to conduct the

interviews because I was also interviewing men. Most interviews with women were conducted either in their house or the place where I was staying. Only three women preferred to do interviews in cafés: they were concerned about their privacy issues.

Finding a quiet café was a bigger issue in the case of the male interviewees because, apart from two men, I interviewed all the male participants in cafés. Methodological textbooks stress that interviews should be conducted in a quiet and private room so that interviewees and interviewers can concentrate on the conversations and can produce good quality tape recordings. However, Rapley notes that it is not always possible to do interviews in 'private' spaces (2004: 18). In cases of cross-gender interviews, Lee (1997) also points out that the place where men are interviewed can be a crucial concern that can affect a female interviewer's sense of vulnerability when the interview is held in a private space because it is possible that a male interviewee can cause sexual fear. I thus decided to interview male participants in a public place and I mainly had to consider how the place would affect the interviewees, especially in terms of their willingness to discuss personal matters (Rapley, 2004: 18). In order to make the interviewees as comfortable as possible, I went to the meeting place very early on the day of the interview so that I could find a cozy and quiet section of the café. In some cases I also checked the suitability of the café before I arranged a time with the interviewee so that I could avoid particularly busy times.

Practical issues such as finding a right place to interview or being sensitive to the process of recruitment highlight that an interviewer can face different problems in interviewing women and men. Gender difference is also evident with women's and men's storytelling to which I shall now turn.

3. Interview Process

3.1 Outline of the Themes

In order to understand women's and men's experiences in marriage and in divorce, I structured my interviews according to the format of a story. I started with the interviewee's early expectations of love, intimacy, marriage, divorce and life after divorce and I divided my questions into four main groups:

- 1) Expectations (love and dating) before marriage,
- 2) The experience of marriage (achievement/reality/change),
- 3) Marriage breakdown/ and divorce,
- 4) Personal and social re-orientation (post-divorce),

The four main themes cannot be understood by considering subjects' experience of divorce and their interpretation of their pasts as the only locations of knowledge construction. One needs to take into account that interviewees' complicated emotions concerning divorce are intertwined with morality. Mason thus argues that the complexity of researching the intersections of family and morality, such as divorce, demands that the interview itself should be considered as 'a site of knowledge construction' (Mason, 2002: 227). It is particularly important to pay attention to the meaning of knowledge construction when exploring how women and men make sense of their divorces and to understand that this process is shaped by ideas about morality and publicly defined ways of being. In her research on childhood and motherhood, Miller articulates this point in a different way by contending that the researcher needs to look at multi-layered voices in 'public, and private and sometimes personal narratives (narratives of a personal sense of self)' (Miller, 1998: 67).

Most questions were asked in an open-ended way and I avoided leading

questions to encourage interviewees to construct their own accounts of important moments in their lives (Riessman, 1993). Although the majority of the interview questions were structured around the themes mentioned above, they were subject to change according to the interviewee's specific interests and perspectives. Before asking the first question, I told the interviewees how much I appreciated the opportunity to interview them and I asked them about their general feelings when they agreed to be interviewed. I then requested their permission to record the interview and I asked them to complete a short questionnaire about their education, income as well as their jobs before and after marriage. My first question was generally as follows: 'Could you tell me when you met your ex-wife/ex-husband?' I started with this question because I wanted them to recall their first memory of their former partners so that we could then progress more easily to discussing the meanings they attached to love and marriage during the early stages of their relationships with their ex partners. All interviewees were informed that they could refuse to answer any questions with which they felt uncomfortable or which they did not wish to talk about. I also told them that they had the right to stop the interview at any time.

In most cases, interviews lasted much longer than I had anticipated. Even though I met the majority of the participants for the first time at the interviews, the interviews lasted between 4 and 12 hours each. Generally, longer interviews were women; the longest interview was 12 hours and 4 women's interviews lasted 6-8 hours. Most of the interviews took approximately 4 hours. This does not mean that I forced them to talk longer but, as we will see, women and men welcomed the chance to talk. During the interview, many interviewees showed various emotional reactions such as crying, anger, sighing. Especially when they cried, I turned the recording machine off, waiting for them to recover. Men and women, however, responded differently to the interview. There are particular problems when a feminist conducts interviews with men, such as the power encounters between the feminist researcher and

the researched (Arendell, 1997; Lee, 1997; Williams and Heikes, 1993).

3.2 Interviews with Male Participants

Before I met with the male interviewees, I was mainly worried about getting them to talk about their personal experiences. This case is relation to the difficulties I encountered when I tried to recruit male interviewees and to the social and cultural factors that prohibit men from publicly discussing their personal lives. My anxiety was further exacerbated by men's comments when I spoke with them to make appointments. Two men told me 'I don't have many things to talk about' and some also said 'I am a very shy person and would it be all right to have some drinks while we are talking?' Men's reluctance to talk can also be related to the way they link talking and social success. During the interview, two men told me how they felt when their friends asked them whether they would be willing to be interviewed: 'It is not easy to talk [about myself]. It feels like boasting to me. I do not have such a good status' [Chul-Su] and 'I am not a famous person. Am I a famous person? You know that kind of feeling' [Chang-Jin].

These men's understanding of being interviewed highlights the connection they make between talking about themselves and their social status and it also reveals the extent to which their identities are based on their work and their social status (Passerini, 1989). Men's hesitation about discussing their lives underwent significant changes over the course of the interviews. For example, Chul-Su told: 'I talked so much today. It gave me a chance to look at my past in different ways' and 'I have never been the kind of person who talks about personal things but today was different. It is strange'. (Chul-Su)

A good interview does not only depend on a man's willingness to talk about himself. There are other concerns that emerge when interviewing men, such as the meaning of power or control as well as the meaning of my silence, which

men tend to consider as being indicative of trust. Arendell argues that one needs to consider various questions when interviewing men, including 'What does gender mean for the research process?', 'What are the power dynamics?' (1997: 343). While keeping these important questions in mind, I will explore some of the specific issues I was confronted with when I interviewed men.

I wore a suit when I met the male interviewees in consideration of the power relationships between the interviewees and me. Schwalbe and Wolkomir argue that this can limit the male interviewees' opportunities for sexualizing the female interviewee and thereby asserting their control. A suit can reduce such opportunities by conveying a sense of being businesslike and serious (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001: 209). The issue of power relations also emerged because I wanted to conduct good interviewees and gain useful data from my male interviewees. The experiences I had when I interviewed men made me realize that this could become a problem. After one of the men told me about his general attitudes towards women, I asked him why he felt the way he did. He responded to my question by asking me 'Why do you want to start an argument?' He then said 'I want to finish the interview now'. When this happened I gave a gentle laugh in order to improve the atmosphere and I changed the question. Rather than asking why 'he' felt that way, I said that 'I just want to know why men in general feel that way about women'. The interview then continued. Lee (1997) notes that in order to continue a cross-gender interview, sometimes 'the most appropriate strategy for a female interviewer to take is to laugh' (Lee, 1997: 559).

It is clear that, for men, the boundary between insider and outsider is determined by gender and one can only be regarded as an insider by talking in a way that does not threaten the masculine self and by conducting the interview in a way that does not overtly assert the female interviewer's control over the interview process. These factors contributed to my reluctance to tell male interviewees that I was a Women's Studies student. Instead, I told them 'I am studying Sociology'. In Korea there is a particularly strong bias against

students of Women's Studies and, if I were to declare my real academic discipline, men would have been more likely to pass judgment and to decide that I was not an appropriate person with whom to discuss a man's life. Men felt safer talking to me because they considered me to be unbiased. One man told me 'You are like a 'neutral gender' and I feel comfortable enough to talk with you.'

In order to be regarded as someone of a 'neutral gender', there are various moments during my interviews with men when I needed to reflect and do emotional work. The first example of this had to do with 'silence'. The researcher needs to be aware that there is a sense of insecurity in all interview situations. However, Schwalbe and Wolkomir argue that this is a very important issue in interviews with men and that the interviewer must be wary of minimizing the masculine self (2001: 207). Schwalbe and Wolkomir point out that this must be kept in mind because men could feel that their autonomy or rationality is being threatened when they sense that the process is being controlled by an interviewer (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001: 206).

Silence was also an important tool in getting men to trust me enough to talk to me. 'Silence' about what the men said was crucial in establishing trust before they talked about the details of their personal lives. This was especially important during the first stage of the interview process. This type of silence helped foster an atmosphere of acceptance and it was part of being a good listener. Silence was not always an easy option, especially when I had to listen to men's sexist attitudes towards women in general and to their sense of superiority over women. I often asked myself 'whether this is right or not' or 'does he really believe the opinion he expressed?' My feelings were similar to what Smart (1984) experienced when she interviewed men. She noted her discomfort because her silence could be regarded as agreement with men's comments and she felt some 'complicity' because it could seem as if she shared the men's views (Smart, 1984: 155). However, she also found that silence could enable her to continue interviews (Smart, 1984: 155). Unlike

Smart I did not interview particularly powerful men. Regardless of this, I also found that silence played an important role in my interviews and that it helped me to gain access to the men's personal stories.

Silence is not just about listening to whatever the men were talking about as it also involves various expressions of 'emotional sympathy'. A sympathetic mind entails a basic sense of sharing that allows one to listen to people's life stories. Emotional sympathy with men, on the other hand, often requires one to accept the basic contexts of their narratives and to avoid making it seem as if one is accusing or judging them when asking why they believe the things they do. It is crucial to understand interviewees' different contexts when analyzing their motives. Mason argues that interviewing is 'the art of knowledge excavation and the task is to enable the interviewee to give the relevant information in as accurate and complete a manner as possible' (2002: 226). Finding answers to the question 'why' proved to be difficult in my interviews with men. These men were embedded in a society where men are not required to explain why they act the way they do. My detailed questions were thus attributed to my ignorance about men's lives and I was told that I ask 'too many' questions about men's lives. This was especially problematic because these men often believed that their marital problems and boredom with women resulted because their ex-wives asked too many questions (see chapter 5).

These men thus perceive my questions as coming from someone who is ignorant about men's lives and they think that someone who was more familiar with men's lives would not expect them to explain their reasons and motivations. I extract two examples to illustrate men's tendency to talk about men in general or men of their generation rather than focusing on themselves or the 'I':

SN: Why did you say that you easily forget about things?

Myoung-Gi: Men forget small things. How can I put this? It is not that men do not keep important things in mind. They just do not hold on to small things.

SN: Do you think that it is unmanly to hold on to small things?

Myoung-Gi: I don't know. Even today [on the day of the interview], some money was misplaced in my office. If my boss had fought about it, he could have gotten the money back. However, he did not. Men are broadminded. That is how men are. [Myoung-Gi]

SN: What do you mean when you say that you gained love by marrying?

Gi-Chan: If you have ever been married you would understand. In my generation, we just become a family [when we get married]. Marriage is everything for men. We do not think about marriage in terms of stages and we don't spend much time worrying about our relationships with our wives. I planned my marriage, I got married and then my marriage was dissolved. [Gi-Chan]

The questions I asked both Myoung-Gi and Gi-Chan were meant to elicit their opinions about their own lives but they generalized their answers to comments about all men's views of marriage and about general male characteristics. During the interviews men's discomfort with answering detailed questions about their personal lives meant that I had to engage in careful consideration about whether I could ask certain questions.

In addition to men's assumption that I could not possibly understand their lives, I also had to deal with sexist preconceptions about my status as a divorced woman. Even among the male interviewees, there were different understandings of 'insider' and outsider'. Some of the men said that they wanted to hear more about my opinions because I was divorced in order to understand their ex-wives' behavior better. However, in other cases, the male interviewees directly connected my experience as a divorced woman with their ex-wives' behavior. Chul-Su is typical of the men who made such a link:

Chul-Su: 'Are you married?'

SN: I'm divorced.

Chul-Su: You ran away from your marriage. You prioritized your own life. Studying is the same as running away. [Chul-Su]

Chul-Su's question and conclusion about my answer seemed to change the dynamics between us as an interviewer and an interviewee. Even though I wanted to explain that my actions cannot be interpreted in such a way without knowing the context of my life, the conversation stopped and he started talking about other things. Chul-Su also used the phrase 'running away' to explain his ex-wife's actions during our interview and he made it clear that he was constructing all divorced women in similar ways.

The various emotions that I experienced, such as feeling that I was starting to understand men better as well as feelings of anger and frustration, reflect the extent to which the interview process is influenced by the places that the interviewer and the interviewee occupy in their larger social spaces. I also realized the importance of being aware of myself. Arendell argues that an interviewer is not 'a neutral investigator' (1995: 11). Similarly, an interviewee is also specifically situated and this leads them to talk about their lives from the basis of their identities as men or in terms of their masculine selves.

After the interviews some of the men used the terms 'therapy' or 'psychologically helpful' to explain how the interview made them feel. They also used these terms to express why they felt that divorce was good for them as Chang-Jin told:

I am so happy today and feel relieved because I was able to talk. I want to have a friend like you with whom I can talk and meet without it just being for an interview. This was the first time I talked about my life and discussed so many of the small things. I have not talked about

many of these things before, not even with old friends. It is nice talking about everything with you. [...] How can I put it? It is like 'therapy' because you let me talk about everything. I can talk about anything I want to without hesitating. If I tell my story, other people might wonder 'why is he talking about it?' [Chang-Jin]

Men's conviction that the interviews were good is related to their belief that I was unbiased and to the fact that I did not interrupt them when they were talking. However, when one considers Min-Su's account of this and the comparisons he makes with other women he has met, it becomes clear that gender is central to men's understanding of what constitutes a good interview.

Women do not listen to the things I say because they are so busy wondering why I am saying it. I decided that I would avoid discussing my feelings and opinions with them. With you I could talk without thinking about everything I was saying. It is like you are a doctor and I am a patient. You did not interrupt me when I was talking. That made it possible for me to talk. [Min-Su]

Day Sclater (1998) notes that ethical issues can arise when one studies divorce narratives. She argues that when interviewees experience feelings that are similar to those of someone who has received therapy, the interviewer needs to be aware that the session can have a positive or negative impact on someone who may be telling a traumatic story. Day Sclater (1998: 76) contends that the power relationship between an interviewer and an interviewee can potentially be more problematic in intersubjective narrative research than in traditional research where there is a more hierarchical relationship. Day Sclater (1998) is also concerned about the possibility of influence because the interview process cannot be free from the interviewer's perspective since the interviewer is also the interpreter and is in a position to have power of interpretation the interviewee's account. It should be kept in mind that the interviewees found the interviews therapeutic because I listened not be seen as threat to masculine

power during the interview.

3.3 Interviews with Female Participants

Holstein and Gubrium's description of an 'active interview' was more applicable to my interviews with women. The interviews led women to 'alternative considerations' about their personal experiences (Holstein and Gubrium, 2002: 120) and they helped them to develop new ideas (DeVault, 2002: 94). Women were more likely to see the interview as an opportunity to explore or reflect on aspects of their experiences that they had not thought about before and they emphasized that they wanted to share their stories with other people:

I feel happy. Talking gives me a chance to reflect on my past. I usually only talk about some bits of my past. [During the interview] I thought that I needed to explain better how things changed from one stage to the next and what happened in between stages. You helped me to understand things better. The interview helped me understand things on a deeper level. [...] I really wanted to do this interview. Even though it is my personal story, I do not want to hide it. If I write my story for a book, it would take up ten books. I want to do this work. [Ji-Sue]

At first I did not want to do it [the interview] because I did not want to think about it [her past] all again. However, I want to share my story with other women who still have no power even though society is better than it used to be. The individual has to help make society better. So even though I was ill, I did it [the interview]. It [the interview] was good. I realized that talking about it with others can allow me to understand certain things and situations differently. [So-Ra]

Regardless of their social experience or personal background, the majority of the women said that they did not only want to do the interview for themselves but that they also wanted to share their stories with others and to contribute to changing society. Only two of the male interviewees expressed similar

concerns. These women linked the opportunity to reflect on the past in new ways with the consciousness raising that took place between me and the interviewees during the interviews. By being open about our lives and experiences with one another, we found commonalities and established a sense of sharing. Feminist scholarship has long stressed the significance of consciousness raising and its role in opening up a new perspective on the world (DeVault, 2002).

Raising consciousness is an emotional task that involves listening and talking by both the interviewer and the interviewee. This is especially important when the interview includes traumatic stories which involve crying, anger and emotional pain. For these reasons I usually scheduled interviews with a day's break between them so that I could have a chance to reflect on each individual's story. I found listening to the interviewees' stories very emotional and I thought a great deal about their pain. I had a chance to talk to one participant a few days after our interview and she told me that she found it very difficult to discuss her memories of things that she had tried to forget. The emotional struggles were particularly acute in the cases of the female participants whose interviews often lasted for many hours. The most emotionally exhausting interview was with Young-Hee, whose interview lasted for 12 hours. I met Young-Hee at her home at 11 o'clock in the morning and finished our interview in the midnight. We only took a break to have dinner. I asked her whether she wanted to take a break and continue the interview at another time because I was worried that she was too exhausted to continue. However, she wanted to continue the interview. Talking for 12 hours involves so much emotional work that she took time off work for a few days after the interview and I also became ill. When the interview was finished, we were both very surprised that we had been talking for such a long time and we both just laughed when I told her that the interview was over. The following extract illustrates Young-Hee's emotional engagement during the interview:

I wouldn't have believed that it was possible to do an interview like this [for 12 hours] [Very surprised voice]. It was not easy to talk about those ten years of my life. I have only ever talked very briefly [about my life] but this was the first time that I discussed it with one person so much. Even though I thought that I had recovered from the pain of my past life and did not expect the interview to be emotional, when I was telling some stories I still had tears in my eyes, felt stiffness in my neck and aching in my body. It [the interview] gave me a chance to look back and I saw that the pain still remains. For me to have a better life, I now realize that there are still tasks left and things that I need to resolve. [Talking] made me recognize this. I also realized how much I have to be grateful for and that I can be proud of the way I have lived my life. [Young-Hee]

Young-Hee's narrative makes it clear that storytelling is not only about reporting one's past. Rather, it involved continuous reflexive reconstruction of Young-Hee's present life and it became a space where she could identify tasks that remained undone and that she would have to tackle in her future. The process of telling her stories also boosted her self-confidence by making her realize how she has survived and moved on from a very painful past. Many of the women noted how they gained a greater sense of their own value through the interview:

There is a difference between thinking about my story and telling it. When I tell my story it makes me reflect on my life. Like 'oh, did I think like that!' Oh, Han-Na, you are great'. [...] I did not know that I was able to think like that. It [the interview] made me realize what a positive person I am. [Han-Na]

It was not an easy process [to talk] [laugh]. I did not want to think about the past. However, I surprised myself by talking about my life without too much emotional difficulty. I admire myself for that. [Na-Ri]

The end of the interviews left me and the interviewees with many different

feelings. For example, they sometimes wanted to continue talking after the interview and I thought about my relationships with the people I had met. After the interviews I talked with half of the interviewees again in various places, including bars, restaurants and their homes. In the case of one person, we talked throughout the night after we had done the interview. I really enjoyed talking to the interviewees afterwards. I felt very privileged to listen to their stories and, in many cases, I was the first person to whom they told their stories. I believe that the interviews gave me the opportunity to meet very special people. I have remained close friends with one of the women I interviewed and I have telephoned some of the other female interviewees from the U.K. to find out how they were doing. One woman told me that she would not change her telephone number and she asked me to call her when I return to Korea. Many of them asked me to write a good thesis and to make their stories visible and audible in society. Our meetings enabled them to share their stories with me and, through my thesis, with others as well.

4. Analytical Process

In order to analyze the narratives, all of the taped interview materials were first transcribed in Korean. The one exception to this was the interview with the woman that lasted for 12 hours. In the case of this particularly long interview I followed Riessman's (1993) suggestion by doing a rough transcription and then retranscribing selected portions for detailed analysis. After I transcribed the interviews, I read them many times and I wrote down ideas in order to classify the contents into research themes. I later translated the quotations I used in writing the thesis into English. In order to preserve anonymity I used pseudonyms. It is particularly important to make sure that Korean readers of my thesis will not be able to recognize the interviewees.

I noted the important themes that emerged when women and men told me about their reasons for getting divorced as well as the themes in their

understandings of intimate relationships, family and their post-divorce lives. I paid special attention to how these understandings are located within gendered lives which can not be free from social, cultural and political factors. My analysis follows the aim of feminism which challenges 'the authority of "scientific" knowledge and particular ways of knowing' (Miller, 1998: 58). This raised the important question of the meaning of 'validity'.

4.1 Validity

Interviews with divorced women and men raise important questions about what constitutes a 'true' story. My reflections about the meaning of truth in divorce narratives are related to my experience of interviewing Na-Ri and Hong-Sye. They had been married and I interviewed them separately. I interviewed Na-Ri first and then I interviewed her ex-husband. The interview with him was challenging because his explanations of the memories that resulted in their marital problems were significantly different from his ex-wife's explanations (see chapter 5 and 6). Since I interviewed Na-Ri first and listened to her memories of the events that led to their divorce, my subsequent interview with Hong-Sye (Na-Ri's ex-husband) caused me to ask myself whether she or he was telling the 'truth'. I found it emotionally difficult to listen to his very different story during our interview. Both Hong-Sye and Na-Ri told me about their reasons for getting divorced and about particular moments that precipitated the divorce. They even discussed which party was the most violent and their interpretations of the divorce differed a great deal.

The concerns that resulted from the discrepancies in their stories caused me to consider the meaning of 'narrative truth' (Plummer, 1995), rather than focusing on a scientific understanding of the truth of women and men's reasons for divorce. Narrative truth emphasizes 'the consequences of saying a particular story under particular circumstances' rather than focusing on 'the matter of truth,' which is related to historical truth (Plummer, 1995: 172). Such an

approach to truth allows one to explore how people's narratives are 'social products' that are constructed within specific 'social, historical and cultural locations' (Lawler, 2002: 242). It is, in other words, 'a way of understanding the consequences of telling a particular story, in a particular way, under specific circumstances' (Weeks et al., 2001: 26). People's 'truths' or the factors they reveal in an individual account are thus 'both personal and social' (Day Sclater, 2000: 51). In addition, where individuals' experiences are concerned, facts and the interpretation of those facts should be 'envisaged as necessarily entwined' (Lawler, 2002: 243). Day Sclater contends that divorced people want to relate their marriage experiences in order to explain how their present selves were shaped by these experiences (2004).

Divorced women's and men's stories can be understood as 'a form of representation' (Jackson, 1998: 48), rather than considering people's stories as accounts of 'raw experience' (Jackson, 1998: 48). I aim to analyze women's and men's stories in order to focus on the ways in which these stories are constructed through a continuous process and how such stories are produced by linking together past and present, self and other (Lawler, 2002). To understand the meaning of these stories, we need to deal with the individual subject and social organizations as well as their interrelationships, for both are crucial to understanding how gender works and how change occurs (Scott, 1986:1068). The ways in which gender differences shape women's and men's stories emerge during the interviews.

5. Summary

This chapter has identified methodological issues in exploring gender and in highlighting how divorced people's narratives are located with social activities. I described my experience of the process utilising feminists methods based upon my own research. In order to understand how people construct accounts of themselves as a 'divorced person', in-depth interviews based on feminist

methodology offered to obtain both rich and lively data from which to draw conclusions and develop understandings. Also, in-depth interviews generated people's moral accounts about how they felt as a person who was contemplating divorce addition to their reasons for divorce. I have discussed the rationale for using interview and the different story telling process between men and women. I have indicated that my situatedness in the research influenced the dynamics of the interview and the accounts produced. By exploring the problems of interviewing men and women, I discussed how people's accounts cannot be treated as 'scientific meaning of truth' but as the outcome of interpreting the meaning of divorce in the context of women's and men's different social locations.

The interview process opened my eyes to the reality that 'the range of people's experiences that are socially acknowledged and named is always much narrower than the range of experiences that people actually have. By implication, no worldview ever encompasses or covers the plenitude of what is actually lived' (Jackson, 2002:23). The time I spent with the interviewees left me with a responsibility to share their stories and I embarked on the analytical and writing up process with a keen sense of this responsibility.

CHAPTER 3

MARRIAGE

1. Introduction

Marriage in South Korea is often seen as an institution that has changed from being traditional and based on lineage decisions to being more modern and resulting from the choices that two individuals make about love. A great deal of research has been carried out documenting this trend. Park Min Ja, for example, states that, since 1980, people started putting more emphasis on love as reasons for marriage (Park Min Ja, 2004; see also Lee Dong Won, et al., 1994). In a 1994 study based on a survey of 440 university students, Kim Heun Young found that 80.5% of men and 89.6% of women said that they would marry 'because of love' (Kim Heun Young, 1995 cited in Park Min Ja, 2004: 122). In a more recent study in 2002 by Park Min Ja, it also emerged that more men and women were citing 'love', 'happiness' and 'achieving individual goals' as their reasons for marrying a particular partner (Park Min Ja, 2003). Referring to the increasing tendency to choose marriage partners based on 'love', many researchers have concluded that this tendency is symptomatic of increasing individualization in Korea (Lee Hyun Song, 1997; Park Min Ja, 2003; Ham In Hee, 2001).

According to these Korean researchers, individualised 'modern' marriage practices are closely linked to changes in the meaning of love. Love, once expressed through prescribed gendered sacrifices for the family, has now become a self-reflexive, self-centred, and individual project (c.f. Giddens, 1992) through which individuals seek and find their own happiness. Women, in particular, are seen as increasingly choosing marriage partners who can

support their personal goals: the increased economic independence of women, it is argued, has facilitated these changes (see Park Min Ja, 2004).

Korean researchers have also found that the greater individualization in people's choices can be connected to the decreased significance of parents' decisions. In one study based on 7256 married women (see Table 7), Lee Hyun Song found that, before 1969, 27.2% of people chose their partners solely on the basis of their parents' advice. This figure dramatically decreased to a barely significant 1.5% by 1990 (Lee Hyun Song, 1997; see also Kim Mi Suk et al., 2002: 104). In Lee Hyun Song's study, it emerged that the main change in terms of marriage practices was that two individuals make a decision about their marital partner and then seek their parents' approval. While only 27.5% followed this route before 1969, 75.6% did so by 1990. From this point of view, Lee concludes that the views of the two individuals now play a crucial role in the choice of partner as they now have more opportunities to meet potential partners without introductions by parents or relatives and they also have more time to meet people before marriage (1997).

Table 7: Trends in Marriage Partner Selection Process

	Total Respondents	Year of Marriage					
		Before 1969	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-91
	7256	1.189	1.144	1.365	1.651	1.480	427
Marriage decision							
Totally controlled by my parents' choice	8.1	27.2	10.5	5.0	2.8	1.8	1.5
Made by my parents and I agree.	25.4	38.6	34.6	28.8	21.3	13.9	9.3
Made by me and parents approve.	55.3	27.5	46.8	54.7	62.2	71.2	75.6
Totally controlled by my choice.	11.1	6.6	8.1	11.5	13.7	13.2	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Lee Hyun Song (1997: 14)

Korean researchers find that there are dramatic changes in the way people

choose their marital partners as well as changes in the meanings people attach to love. Researchers explain these changes in marriage practices by relating them to the opposition between individuals and families or between tradition and modernity. Yet, less academic attention has been paid to exploring the complexities of individual understandings of love and family connections and their impact on marriage practices, which, as I shall show in this chapter, have clear gender differences.

Returning to Lee Hyun Song's study, we find that even though it has become much less common for parents to choose marriage partners without considering the opinions of their children, the majority of people still continue to seek parental approval of their marriages. In other words, it is still uncommon for two individuals to choose their marital partners without any parental involvement: before 1969, 6.6% had no parental input while 13.6% had none in 1990 (see table 7 above). It is thus necessary to explain parental approval in a Korean context and to explore how individuals' negotiations can become very complicated even though there is less emphasis on the direct decisions of parents. It is also important to consider to what extent individuals' opportunities for meeting potential partners are already shaped by their parents' preferences in terms of marital partners. In other words, researchers need to examine how individuals experience the 'crossroads' between family practice and individual practice. Although these types of practices may seem distinct, they are intricately connected and people experience them in ways that are also gendered (Locoh, 1994: 194; See also Kendall, 1996).

In this chapter, I argue that marriage cannot adequately be explained by separating the traditional from the modern way of loving and choosing marriage partners. Rather, one must consider how any individual's marriage is always already embedded in the daily practices of and negotiations with their own family networks. In addition, a dichotomous understanding of traditional gendered roles and modernized roles obfuscates the continued centrality of embodied gendered roles in marriage. It is necessary to explore the different

ways in which women and men relate to marriage practices and discourses of tradition or modernity in South Korea.

From this point of view, I explore the complexity of gendered marriage practices in Korea by analyzing the ways in which women and men are differently caught or positioned between traditional and modern ideas of marriage and family life. I will consider how the differences between men's and women's marriage practices are closely linked to their different positions in the family and in society. This is primarily done by exploring the ways in which narratives of love and marriage reveal different social and subjective expectations and how understandings of love and marriage are connected to family practices.

2. Love and Marriage

2.1 Love

Processes of courtship and marriage are informed by notions of what constitutes an ideal 'man' and 'woman', 'husband' and 'wife', 'son-in-law' and 'daughter-in-law'. This is true for marriages that are the result of matchmaking as well as those that are entered into 'for love' (Kendall, 1996: 91). Marriage stories in Korea are structured according to different discourses and expectations from those in the West. In the West, stories of couples who choose their partners without considering the emotional bond of falling in love would be regarded as extremely rare³ (Lewis, 2001). Langford (1999) argues that, although marriage remains popular in the West, the meaning of marriage has shifted. It was 'once a binding contract which fixed one's position within the social structure' that has now 'become an optional and soluble sign of commitment to someone with whom one has fallen in love' (1999: 3).

3. Some Asian ethnic groups in Britain still have arranged marriage (Allan and Crow, 2001).

Romantic love has a long history and the idea of companionate marriage has been widespread since the middle of the 20th century (Lewis, 2001). However, the meaning individuals attached to marriage is said to have changed recently. Bawin-Legros (2004: 242) contends that a '[n]ew sentimental order now rests more upon an individualistic withdrawal into self and a fundamental and newly redefined distinction' in the name of intimacy and that this trend is based on love and happiness. The number of theorists suggest that more fragile and contingent love – 'liquid love' (Bauman, 2003) or 'confluent love' (Giddens, 1992) – has become a new form of love in the West, but these ideas are much debated and contested (see Jackson, 1999; Jamieson, 1998, 1999; Seidman, 1991).

Seidman (1991: 101) notes that 'love does not have a fixed identity or essence'. There are historical variations in the meanings of love and in 'the practices it entails' (1991: 101). Whatmore, Seidman goes on to state that in certain societies at a particular time, different meanings may be attached to love according to differences in class, race, ethnicity, religion or age (Seidman, 1991: 101). There are also cultural differences in the meanings of love and love does not mean the same thing in Korea as in the West. Jackson points out that 'love cannot be treated as if it has an existence independent of the social and cultural context within which it is experienced' (Jackson, 1999: 96).

The concept of love and the expectation of intimacy in South Korea are distinctive because of Korea's particular history of moving towards modernity. The idea of a companionate marriage in the West, where the partner is a 'kind of best friend', is not directly applicable in the case of the Korea. Kendall suggests that the illusion that marriage practices necessarily follow a 'trajectory of "modernity" elides other issues which have great bearing upon why, when and through what sequence of procedures people marry, the reasons different people make the choices they do, and the very different consequences of these choices for different segments of the population' (Kendall, 1996: 90). Also, in the West, it is assumed that the emotional attachment between sexual

partners, formed through 'falling in love,' rather than kinship and family influence, forms the basis of the marital relationship. In Korea, this is not often the case, as I shall discuss in terms of stories of love and marriage.

2.2 *'Stories of Love' and 'Stories of Marriage'*

Stories of love in Korea do not often lead to stories of marriage. Quite the contrary, there tends to be a disconnection between these two stories. They are about different relationships and they are linked to different individual and social expectations. The gap between these two types of stories emerges most clearly when individuals draw a contrast between their love and marriage stories. For example, Jo-An, who married in 1995 when she was 28 years old, says of her ex-husband: 'He was never the man I would fall in love with. He was just the right man to marry' (Jo-An). Men also want different characteristics in a dating partner and a marriage partner, as Tae-Soo remarks:

There is, of course, a big difference. When you choose a marriage partner, the issue is whether the marriage would work well. When you have a dating relationship, you only have to deal with the emotional aspects of the relationship and manage the problems with love. But to live as a family well [pause] it involves many other problems, such as problems with other family members, economic situations and so on. You need more than love in a marriage; you also need to trust your marriage partner (Male, Tae-Soo).

These different expectations of a marriage partner can also be a reason to break up with one's girlfriend or boyfriend. Six of the 17 women and 1 of the 13 men I interviewed said that they have ended a relationship because they had different expectations of marriage or because they felt that their partners were not ready or suitable for marriage. These 7 interviewees who ended relationships for this reason, whether they were pressured by parents or made the decision on their own, illustrate that there are general expectations about what is required from a prospective spouse and that these differ from what is

expected of dating partners. Women's and men's reasons for breaking up are related to choosing a partner for marriage rather than just dating. There is an assumption that a dating relationship is about the love and emotions between two individuals. One of the main differences between marriage and love stories is the extent of parental involvement in the choice of a suitable marital partner.

2.3 Family Practices

For the women and men in my sample, the family still played a crucial role in the whole relationship process. The family is involved in everything from the choice of partner and the courting to the wedding and, if it comes to it, they are also involved in the divorce process. In order to understand marriage stories in Korea, it is necessary to observe the adult son's or daughter's family's practices. However, to understand family practices, one must consider more than just the pressure the family exerts on individuals to marry. It is also crucial to explore people's expectations about marriage as well as the beliefs that the larger society has about marriage. Women's and men's personal narratives explain how their negotiations when choosing their partners intersect with cultural and individual pressure to do 'the right thing.' This is a more apt description of the process than the open negotiations based on more free choice as envisaged by many Korean researchers.

Despite the fact that only 4 of my interviewees were introduced to their partners by their parents, the whole marriage process is closely connected with parents' wishes and ideals for their children's marriages. The involvement of family in men and women's choice of partner takes many forms, such as introductions by parents, daily pressure and concerns about parents' happiness. These family practices are clearly connected to the view of marriage as a normal part of the dominant life course and it is extremely difficult to free oneself from the social pressure to get married at the right time, at the right age and to the right partner. Individuals experience pressure from society in general

and from their parents in particular. In my sample, individuals found that it was very difficult to go against their parents' wishes. Only one woman, Na-Ri, married her boyfriend despite her parents' persistent refusal to give their blessing. However, even Na-Ri waited for three years until her parents finally accepted her marriage. She had to go through a long process of persuasion to convince her parents that her marriage promised her a better future. Even when individuals meet their partners through their personal networks, their choices continue to reflect their parents' expectations. This, however, does not mean that individuals do not experience tensions between their wishes and their parents' desires. Rather, the choices of individuals are already inextricably intertwined with cultural, social and familial expectations. However, despite the significance of the parents' influence on both women's and men's marriage choices, the experience of a family's involvement in the decision to marry is a gendered experience.

In what follows, I will begin with men's accounts because they were far briefer than those of women and also less complicated or ambivalent. Men talked in terms of traditional gendered motives for their choice of a wife, such as finding a woman of good character and a good carer. I will then move on to women's long marriage stories to explain how they are positioned between individual desire and the social and cultural meaning of marriage (see section 4).

Women's accounts reveal their complex negotiations and the tension between the traditional/modern meaning of choosing a marital partner.

3. Men's Stories of Marriage

Men's more brief and straightforward accounts of choosing marriage partners are explicable in terms of family structure in Korea: men consider marriage as a stage in which 'a new person will come to their house'. Therefore, even though men might experience pressures regarding marriage, these pressures were unlikely to be about emotions. They talk about the specific and clear

reasons for their choices in terms of family practices, women's good character and their moral responsibility. Tae-Soo's and Hyun-Gil's narratives about their feelings about marriage are typical of the accounts of male interviewees:

Actually, there are many people who become very sensitive when they consider marriage, but I did not feel sensitive about it. [...] I just thought that one more person would be added to my family. I did not take it [marriage] very seriously. [Tae-Soo]

Tae-Soo simply considers marriage as involving the addition of another person to his family. Tae-Soo's case is distinctive in that he has to live with his mother. However, even when they do not live with their parents, men's understandings of marriage are featured in terms of a new person moving into men's family. For example, Hyun-Gil discusses this in relation to difficulties of the beginning of his relationship with his wife.

I thought all the arguments that occurred before marriage were just linked to 'the process' of getting married. We fought so much even though I cannot remember why. [...] I understood that all these problems arose because a new person moved into the house. So there is a little adjustment period. I thought that things would be all right after that. [Hyun-Gil]

Men's concern for their whole family is an important issue in finding a wife, especially 'a woman of good character', since women have the practical responsibility of taking care of the man as well as his whole family. Even though the men in my sample did not say that their parents directly introduced potential marital partners to them, the process of choosing their partners is already interconnected with men's family practices. In other words, a man chooses a wife both for himself and for his parents.

3.1 A Woman of Good Character

In South Korea, the tendency for women to have the gendered role of taking responsibility 'inside the home', called the 'housewifization' of women (Moon Seung Sook, 2002: 84), emerged in the 1930s. Since 1960 it has been an ideal built in tandem with Confucian gender ideology that functionally assigns women and men to the 'inside' and 'outside' of the household respectively (Moon Seung Sook, 2002: 84-85). The spatial divisions in the homes of the old yangban nobility that positioned women in interior space and men in the exterior ultimately came to 'naturalize a new and very different division of labour for a broad segment of the population' (Moon Seung Sook, 2002: 84). However, in Korea, the meaning of 'inside' is not only confined to the space occupied by the nuclear family. A woman's role is extended to 'Jiban,' which involves more than the nuclear family or even the couple's parents. *Jiban* includes the lineage of the partner's past and present family and it becomes the basis on which a good family future is expected. *Jiban* is thus connected with the partner's family clan. Therefore, the good character of a woman is thus seen as crucial for maintaining harmony in all family matters and as a good indicator of women's roles in child bearing, ancestor worship and economic management. These considerations are important regardless of whether a woman lives with a man's family or whether they live separately after marriage (Kim Hae Suk et al., 2005).

A survey of parents' opinions about their preferences concerning a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law indicated that a good character was seen as the most important character trait in daughters-in-law. Among a total of 1525 people responding a survey conducted in 2000, 63.9% considered a daughter-in-law's good character as the most important thing, compared to only 36.3% who considered a son-in-law's good character as the most important issue (Lee Dong Won et al., 2001 cited in Ham In Hee, 2001). Therefore, men's meaning of a woman's good character is not an individual aspect but it is influenced by a notion of a good carer, which is seen as getting along with family members -

especially men's parents, as Hong-Sye and Tae-Soo said:

She was older than me. At the beginning, I liked her like an older sister. However, my father really liked her character. I wanted to make my father happy. When my father was in hospital, she [Na-Ri] treated my father so well [Na-Ri was a nurse at the time]. [Hong-Sye]

Tae-Soo: I was the eldest son and I had three younger sisters. My family was not rich. In many respects, I thought that I would not be considered a good marriage prospect.

[...]

Tae-Soo: Before I married her, I told her what my living conditions were like - I told her that my family was very poor, and we had to live with my mother after marriage. It was important to have some affection but my family's situation was a huge issue in any decision about marriage. Living together is different from having a date. For example, some problems from members of my family or economic problems could come up when I was married. I could not deal with all the problems myself and I would need her help to take care of the family. After marriage, if other members of my family did not get along with her or had repeated problems with her, our marriage would be negatively affected even though things between the two of us might have been good. So it is very important to find out whether we can trust each other to fulfil those roles as well. I was told that it was O.K. [his ex-wife told him]. Then I got married. [Tae-Soo]

Both Hong-Sye and Tae-Soo reveal that their underlying reasons for choosing specific marital partners are centred on the women's good relationship with their family. Tae-Soo's explanation that his family's opinions of his wife could bring about marital risk makes it clear that his marriage depends on his wife's ability to get along well with his family. His marriage can only survive if his wife fulfils this familial role and responsibility: the woman's role as carer of his whole family becomes the deciding factor that determines the success or failure of the marriage.

Men's parents also prioritize a woman's character as the most important quality they look for in their son's marital partner. When a man's parents – in

particular a man's mother – do not like their daughter-in-law, it is often because the daughter-in-law appears to have a stronger character than the son. Hee-Tae and Hyun-Gil discussed their parents', especially their mothers', dissatisfaction with their wives-to-be.

Hee-Tae: My family did not like her. My mother has specific expectations of what a daughter-in-law should be and my sister also has her ideas about an ideal sister-in-law. [...] When they met her [wife-to-be] they thought that she was not the kind of woman they wanted as a daughter-in-law and a sister-in-law.

SN: What aspect of her personality made them think that?

Hee-Tae: Hm. She looked very strong and she was very straightforward. [Hee-Tae]

Hyun-Gil: Even though I don't know why she [his mother] felt like that, she [his mother] did not like her [his wife-to-be].

SN: Why didn't she like her?

Hyun-Gil: She looked so strong. Her 'Gi'⁴ looked so strong. My brother and my brother's wife did not like her. My brother's wife even wanted to introduce me to another woman. HaHa. [Hyun-Gil]

A 'woman of good character' is seen as someone who will fulfil her caring responsibilities and a strong character is judged as something that will prevent a woman from fulfilling these marital responsibilities. The ideal heterosexual relationship is based on different and gender specific notions of 'what is most material, vital and desirable' in the bodies of men and women and these gender requirements are incorporated in the marriage transaction (Kendall, 1996: 94). A good character and a good relationship with the family are two of the vital

4. Gi is a kind of energy which comes from the (interacting) principles of Yin and Yang. When a woman has a strong Gi, there is an assumption that this will weaken her husband's Gi. This is regarded as a problem since a man is expected to be the leader of the home while a woman should be submissive. When a man's parents talk about a woman's Gi as something that can cause problems and that can harm the son's future prospects, they reveal the importance of such considerations in decisions about marriage and divorce.

requirements that men look for in a woman who is a potential marriage partner.

3.2 Looking for A Good Wife/Carer

Men's narratives about their main reasons for choosing specific partners are centred on women's good characters. When women talk about wanting to meet men with good characters, they do so in the context of their desire for men with whom they can have marriages of equality (see Section 4.5). Men, on the other hand, connect women's good characters with their ability to care for them and their families. All but 4 of men talked about being impressed by the caring and warm characters of their wives-to-be when they first met. When I asked Chul-Su how he felt when he first met his wife, he replied:

She was warm and tender-hearted. [...] I did not receive a lot of love from my mother. My mother was always busy with all the housework and with ancestor worship and she favoured my eldest brother. I was practically ignored by my mother. I was hungry for my mother's love. She [his ex-wife] gave me 'Jeong' [a kind of love]⁵ like that of a mother. I was inclined to care for her and I also wanted to rely on her. [...] I proposed by saying that 'I want to eat 'Achimbab' [breakfast]⁶ that you cook for me'. [Chul-Su]

Two other men, Chang-Jin and Hong-Sye, also talked about not feeling loved

5. 'Jeong' is a kind of love but it also has a different meaning in Korea. Jeong is often used to describe a long relationship in which it is difficult to judge whether the relationship is based on strong emotional intimacy or on feelings of inseparable family bonds. Jeong is widely used, for example, parents' jeong, friend's jeong, marital couples' jeong.

6. Even though this kind of proposal does not seem very romantic in a Western context, wanting to eat breakfast with someone implies wanting to live with that person and it is also the symbol of a woman's love in Korea. Breakfast is a proper meal rather than a snack. In Kim Hae Syun and Lee Jae Rim's research in 2003, men consider women's preparation of a 'good breakfast' as one of the most important factors in feeling satisfied with their marital lives. The researchers also found that when men eat a proper meal in the morning they feel proud of their wives' preparation of the breakfast and they boast about it at their places of work. It is common for men to compare themselves to men who did not have a good breakfast prepared for them (Kim Hae Syun and Lee Jae Rim, 2004).

by their mothers and they related this to the deep affection they felt for their wives-to-be because of their warm and caring natures. Chang-Jin explains this as follows:

Rather than looking for love, I wanted to have a family as soon as possible. If I got married, I would have a home and a family of my own. I thought that she would treat me well because she has warm-hearted and she was nice to me. I did not get enough love from my mother. That was very important. [Chang-Jin]

Chang-Jin sees motherhood in terms of a woman's role as a good carer for men. The meaning of a good character is thus not self contained. Rather, it is influenced by the woman's ability to fulfil the role of motherhood in terms of the image and expectations that men have of mothers. The way they regard their mothers seem to affect the way in which they judge their wives' characters and conduct. Men's accounts show that their preference for women with good characters is constructed with reference to the role model of their real mother or ideal mother, through whom men project the meanings and values attached to women's practices. Men, in other words, position women in relation to their mothers (c.f. Hollway, 1984; see also Jackson, 1999). Men use the term 'mother' when they try to explain their feelings for their wives-to-be and they understand 'home' as a place they can depend on. When men become old enough to marry, they regard women's capacity to be caring as the most important factor when choosing a wife.

Myoung-Gi: When I was 29 years old, my sister-in-law introduced her to me. I had a good impression of her when I met her.

SN: *What did you like about her?*

Myoung-Gi: I felt like that she would take care of a man well. She did not look like someone with a very strong character. [Myoung-Gi]

Myoung-Gi, Gi-Chan and Sang-Chul all talked about the warmth of their wives-to-be and about their own age as crucial reasons to get married. Men's expectations about marriage are shaped by role models that adhere to traditional ideal gendered roles. In the process of marriage, men base their decisions on the ideal heterosexual marital relationship and their choice of marital partner is also affected by their sense of moral responsibility as well as by prevailing social and cultural norms.

3.3 Responsibility and Love

In my sample, two men and one woman married because of pregnancy.⁷ Two men, Hee-Tae and Min-Su, felt responsible to their partners when they fell pregnant and they got married for this reason, even though they expressed their lack of emotional commitment to their partners. When men talk about getting married because of their sense of responsibility, they distinguish between narratives of marriage and narratives of love. Hee-Tae and Min-Su both talk about feeling responsible when their partners became pregnant and they describe this as the main reason for getting married. Hee-Tae got married in 1996 when he was 29 years old and his ex-wife was 24 years old. He talks about his strong sense of responsibility.

Hee-Tae: I think the main reason for getting married [Pause], well, I was the eldest son. Three months after we met, we slept together after drinking a lot. I get drunk easily. Not because of a special feeling, but due to the circumstances, I had to maintain our relationship because it was a kind of responsibility.

7. Of 30 interviewees, six women and three men had not had sex before marriage. Most of the interviewees who had not had pre-marital sex were introduced to their partners by their families and their families were deeply involved in arrangements for the relationship. The female interviewees who had not had sex were particularly clear about this being the reason for their abstinence.

SN: *Before you slept together, what did you think of her?*

Hee-Tae: At that time, I felt about [her] like a younger sister. There was someone else for whom I had a special feeling. My feelings for her [ex-wife] did not change but I had to take responsibility for my actions and this was my main reason for getting married. We had known each other for some time before starting a relationship because we lived in the same area. I had to consider both families' position. Even though they [both sets of parents] do not know each other well, everyone knows who my parents are. It is such a small region. Ever since I was a young child, my father had also taught me to take responsibility for all my actions, even for trivial things. He was a stern father. [Hee-Tae]

The fact that both of them lived in a small town where people knew each other influenced his feeling of responsibility. He thus chose to get married not simply because of his feelings for the woman who was going to have his baby. He takes responsibility because he wants to save face for his parents and for himself.

Hee-Tae's sense of responsibility is clearly based on people's gaze since he notes that people know him and his family. He is also influenced by his father's teachings about what is right and wrong. All these factors meant that there was a great deal of social pressure on him when he made the choice to sacrifice the woman he loved. While Hee-Ta gave up the woman he loved because of sense of responsibility, three men choose their partners based on love. As we will see, whereas women often talked about experiencing tension between considerations of love and external conditions, no men expressed such ambivalence. Joo-Min's narrative, for example, illustrate this:

When people meet other people, they consider what resources potential partners have. I don't do that. [...] I don't care about a partner's resources. It is just about love. If I love her that is enough. [Joo-Min]

Men's emphasis on the fact that they loved their partners and experienced no

emotional struggles about their choice reveals a difference from women who express a lot of ambivalence in relation to love. Farrer argues that, in the Chinese context, we need to realize that 'men feel these contradictions between romantic love and external conditions as well, but less so, because they are more easily able to pursue strategic relations in one realm (career) and emotive relations in another (marriage)' (1998: 192). However, women's individualized choices are more problematic and subject to critique in a liberal market society in which 'women must seek love in marriage, but also economic support for child rearing' (Farrer, 1998: 192).

For men, marital life already assumes consistent family support. This assumption is based on social and cultural norms about men's family values and their marriages and they are always already embedded in the daily practices of their own family networks and also in the traditional women's roles at home, as I discuss. Women's stories on the other hand, reveal deep-rooted, unstable and uncertain feelings about their marital lives. Women's complex narratives result from the specificities of their situations since women's marriages will affect their identity as individuals as well as their socio-economic position. They also have to construct new relationships with the husband's family and his family includes an extended network of relatives. I will explore women's marriage stories about choosing the right partners and how various family practices influenced their choices. I will also consider the tensions between love and men's social status and the meaning of equality. It is difficult to pinpoint any factor as the major reason for choosing a marital partner because many different factors play a role.

4. Women's Stories of Marriage

4.1 The Daily Pressure to Get Married

Women talk more about pressure from their parents. The different kinds of parental pressure that women and men experience are related to their different

social situations. Women feel more pressure to marry at the 'right age': if they do not, they are often subjected to emotional criticism. They also experience more pressure to marry with the 'right person'. This results in a lack of confidence and causes women to rush their decision when they reach an age that is considered to be appropriate for marriage.⁸ 11 of the 17 women attributed their reason for marrying their partners to the fact that they were the 'right age' for marriage. Social pressure on women to marry at the 'right time' and age reinforces the daily pressure that parents exert, and also makes it very difficult for women to free themselves.

Young-Hee describes how she experienced daily pressure from her parents to get married after she broke up with her previous boyfriend. Young-Hee's relationship ended because her boyfriend thought that his mother would not accept their relationship, because her family was of a lower status than his mother expected. As a result Young-Hee never even had the opportunity to meet her boyfriend's mother. After the break-up, her parents kept introducing her to men. She describes how tense her daily life with her parents was until she got married in 1995.

I was 31 years old at the time [when she met her husband]. Every day, I'd hear at least 12 times from my father, 'how dare you to go to the toilet if you do not want to get married'. It was intolerable pressure. I've had around 40 to 50 marriage meetings since I was 28. My father already arranged the meeting with him [her husband]. It was the eve of the lunar New Year [The most important national holiday in Korea]. I was preparing the food. 'Today at five o'clock', my father said. 'Why do you only mention it today?', I asked. He said, 'if I [her father] had mentioned it before, you might not have wanted to go and we might have argued'. While I was cooking, I was so angry. I went there [to meet a man], smelling of oil and food [with an angry voice]. [Young-Hee]

8. In 1990, the average age at which men got married was 27.8 and for women it was in 24.8 and in 1995 the figure for men was 28.4 and for women it was in 25.4. In 2004, men's average age for getting married increased to 30.6 and women's average age increased to 27.5 in women (National annual Statistics, 2005).

As is also explained by So-Ra, home becomes a place where women who are old enough to get married experience a great deal of pressure.

I was 29 years old [when she met her husband]. I experienced a lot of pressure from my father. I got married because I wanted to escape from the restraints of my home rather than because I was one hundred percent fond of my husband. Apart from the time when I was an aerobics teacher, I always stayed at home because my father was against me having a job. He'd say, 'Why does a woman work? Just stay at home and get married.' [So-Ra]

Mi-Ran was also pressured to marry at the first available opportunity because she was the eldest daughter. Mi-Ran's parents had introduced her to prospective husbands since she was a first-year university student. Although Mi-Ran had previously had a boyfriend, her parents forbade the relationship because his family was 'too poor'. Mi-Ran was introduced to her ex-husband by her mother after she broke up with her boyfriend. She explains:

Mi-Ran: After dating someone for a long time, it was hard to meet other men. My ex-boyfriend was the right person for me. However, if I had continued seeing him, my father would not want to see me again. 'Continue seeing him if you wish to destroy us [her parents]. Your sister is already of marriageable age. You block her path'. That's what my father said.⁹

SN: *But you were just 25 years old?*

Mi-Ran: Yeah. But even my sister said I was 'a night soil wagon, move out'. At home, my parents kept asking me: 'Do you think you are that great?' My mother always asked me: 'Why are you picking and choosing so many men?' Normally, the men I met wanted to see me again but I told my parents that I felt nothing for them. Maybe my

9. In Korea, it is not considered proper for a younger sister and brother to marry before an older sibling's marriage. Therefore, there is considerable pressure on the oldest sibling to get married at a certain age.

parents thought I expected too much. [Mi-Ran]

Mi-Ran's choice needed to be legitimized by her parents and she had to break up her relationship because her boyfriend was deemed to be 'unsuitable' for marriage. Moreover, even though she had numerous opportunities to meet men, the opportunities resulted from her parents' introductions and they did not consider her feelings about the matter. Consequently, she became marginalized and isolated within the family. This problem grew more and more serious and the daily insults from her family created a situation in which Mi-Ran felt increasingly compelled to prove her ability and her worth to her family. Her value was contingent upon the social expectation of marriage and the status that is created by marriage.

Women also experience pressure to choose the right marriage partner.

Women's concern with making the right choice is another area in which family involvement plays an important role. However, the family involvement is not only negative but it also reduces women's uncertainty and anxiety about their future marriage.

4.2 Family Connections

Women's connection with their birth families can alleviate their uncertainty about their future in new families and the risks that result from their lack of experience of marriage. Marriage can cause feelings of uncertainty because, for women, it has traditionally been seen as a process of leaving their birth families and entering into a man's family. Women experience 'a rupture' as they change from being single women to developing their new identities as wives. Marriage is seen as a different stage in a woman's life and it radically changes her sense of wholeness and of self as a woman is split from her birth family to be linked to a new home (Lawler, 2000: 158).

It is thus necessary to analyze how women's parents' views can make them resolve these feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. Women's feelings are often revealed through their expressions, for example, 'he was like family' (Su-Ji), 'Both sets of parents really liked each other, this could be a sign that it is time to get married' (Min-Hae) and 'Even on the day [when the parents first met], his parents called me a daughter-in-law. Everyone felt pleased' (Soo-Yun). When a woman feels accepted by a man's family, she feels closer to her partner and she gains a sense of safety and familiarity that helps her deal with the uncertainty that the move away from her birth family has caused.

An example of this can be found in the narrative of Su-Ji, who used the term 'family' to describe the feeling of closeness with her ex-husband. In 1998 Su-Ji was 28 years old. Her mother had met her ex-husband in a police station by chance, and he asked her to introduce him to a 'good' woman. They exchanged phone numbers and he subsequently married Su-Ji after dating her for six months. In the story below Su-Ji talks about her initial feelings towards him.

Su-Ji: I think I had a good first impression of him, because my mother introduced him to me. Because my mother liked him very much, I didn't doubt that he was a good person. I thought he was very funny too. He was very humorous and I felt things were fine. However, I did not feel that we communicated well or that we shared similar spiritual values. I did not have any special feeling that he was the man I wanted to spend the rest of my life with.

SN: *Why did you get married to him?*

Su-Ji: Um...I was 28 at that time. Maybe, I thought I had reached an age at which I should get married. I also felt bored and needed something fresh. He just came to me at the right time.

SN: *Did he propose marriage?*

Su-Ji: He asked me to marry him. My mother thought he was all right. I then married him just like that. [Su-Ji]

Su-Ji's notion of a special person is based on 'the companionate ideal' in

which shared emotions and spiritual feelings are important (Day Sclater, 2000). Although her husband was not the special person she expected to meet, he was the man who came to her 'at the right time' and enjoyed her mother's approval. These factors outweighed the fact that he might not have been her companionate ideal. Su-Ji continues to talk about her motives for marrying him:

When I met him, I didn't question whether he could only be a dating partner. Because I met him at the right time for marriage, I only asked myself: 'Is he the man for marriage?' [Su-Ji]

It is clear that she is very concerned about general social expectations to get married at the 'right time'. Her mother's opinion of her marriage partner is also an important factor that makes her certain about her choice. This emerges from her description of him as 'family'.

SN: What do you mean when you say that he was like family?

Su-Ji: Um Um like family [pause] what can I say? First, my mother introduced him. [...] My mother 'opened' 'the door'. That was of huge [a very loud voice] importance. Because I believed in my mother's choice [a long pause]. I already gave 50% to him [before meeting him]. I always thought that 'my mother's insight is right'. So I felt certain that the man would be right. That's why I didn't have doubts about him. My mother affected me enormously [her marriage]. I was very uncertain about my future. But my mother somehow decreased my feeling of uncertainty about my future married life. Now when I think about that, I feel so strange [laugh]. [Su-Ji]

In this case, there is a connection between her decision to marry and her belief in her mother. She regarded her mother as someone who could provide guidance for her future. Even though she knew this man only for a short time, her statement that 'he was like family' reveals that she feels like she already knows him well enough to marry him. This conviction is the result of her close bond with her mother. Her comments also reemphasize the fact that she did not

judge him in terms of how she felt about him as an individual.

Here, family practice influences her marriage in two ways: one is through her mother's introduction and the other is the way in which her strong connection with her mother alleviates her uncertainty about her future by making her feel as if the man her mother introduced to her is like 'family'. Su-Ji's uncertainty about her marriage choice comes second to the confidence she has in her mother's support and the social factors that determine the right time for marriage.

Min-Hae, who broke up with her boyfriend because of her parents' disapproval, also felt uncertain about the right marriage partner and about the right time to get married. In 1991, Min-Hae met her husband-to-be only a few times before deciding to marry him. She broke up with her boyfriend because her mother did not like him as she was dissatisfied with the level of his university education and with his appearance. Her mother did not say, 'I don't like your boyfriend' but rather acted as if he did not exist. At the time, Min-Hae did not want to fight with her mother and she believed that her mother must have had a 'proper reason' for opposing her relationship. She thus decided to break up with her boyfriend and started seeing other men. Her ex-husband was one of these men. She was introduced to her ex-husband and his circumstances were considered proper because her family was looking for someone who could study abroad with their daughter. She describes the meeting between his parents and her parents, which was arranged after she met her ex-husband twice:

When I came back home after meeting him again [the second time], there was a phone call from his aunt and a teacher [Min-Hea's high school teacher as well as her husband-to-be's uncle who introduced them], saying that his parents want to meet my parents soon – the next day. I was upset. We did not talk about our future at all. So how could our parents meet? [...] Anyway, we met the next day [a laugh]. His parents seemed to be very nice. I had that kind of impression. On the spot, both parents started talking about our engagement date. It's really

[pause] embarrassing. I never talked about how I got married. I did not say anything about it for ten years [this means she talked about it only after her divorce]. In the back of my mind I was thinking, 'We can't get engaged', but they [both sets of parents] had already set the date because he had to go back to France. I kept thinking to myself that this was not going to happen. It should not. On the other hand, after breaking up with my previous boyfriend, I had been uncertain about my future marriage. Whenever I met a man, and the relationship became serious, I would wonder and ask myself, 'How can I decide to marry?', 'When do I have to make that decision?', 'What level of feeling can lead me to make up my mind to get married?' Um Um. But then, I found both families liked each other so much when they met that day. I felt, if the parents really liked each other, this could be a sign that it is time to get married. So, I got married. [Min-Hae]

Min-Hae describes her marriage as something she was unsure about and she even notes that it was embarrassing that she did not know the man she was going to marry very well. The parents' decision on an engagement date is part of traditional marriage practice but Min-Hae experiences the tension between this decision and the fact that she did not really know her husband-to-be. These tensions between both sets of parents' strong support and her lack of confidence about what type of feeling should lead her to choose someone as a marriage partner are ultimately resolved when she accepts the marriage.

Several women talked about feeling pressured to make a decision about their husbands-to-be and although this pressure resulted from different factors, it was always connected to the fact that the women were rushed into getting married. A similar pattern emerged from several women's narratives, which explains why they were unable to exercise real choice about getting married (c.f. Lips, 1994: 101). For example, in 2003 Soo-Yun broke up with her boyfriend after dating him for three years. After the break-up, her parents were very worried about her age because she was 34 years old. Soo-Yun met her ex-husband after both their fathers arranged it. She had only been seeing him once a week for one month when her father arranged a meeting between both sets of parents without consulting her. Five months after the parents met, she got

married. She describes her feelings as follows.

Soo-Yun: Marriage plans were under way. There were so many bad things that happened during that time. Well [pause]. It is a strange story. I can not understand why my father did it. He arranged the meeting for our parents without asking me about it and he also said, 'My daughter felt too shy to express her feelings even though she wanted to marry. Let's have a parents' meeting'. Of course, the man's parents also wanted us to marry. Just one month later, the meeting was arranged and I went there.

SN: *How did you feel about it?*

Soo-Yun: I clearly told my father, 'I do not want to go [in a loud voice]'. Even though I told my father, I had to go. He said, 'The parents made an effort to arrange the meeting. Why don't you go just to see what the atmosphere is like?' So, I went [pause].

SN: *How did you feel when you went there?*

Soo-Yun: Even on that day, the man's parents called me daughter-in-law.

SN: *On that day?*

Soo-Yun: Yes. [They] really liked me. His father liked me so much. He looked very nice. My ex-husband's older brother's wife came as well. [pause] After that meeting, everyone felt pleased. All the family members approved of our relationship and felt happy. Really [a loud voice] they all talked about strongly supporting us. My parents particularly wanted me to marry because of his family background and my age. [...] Everyone was pressuring us into marriage. 'Do it'. My parents nagged and kept asking 'Why do you drag the marriage out so long?'

SN: *Even six months were too long for them to delay the marriage?*

Soo-Yun: Yes [very emphatic voice]. [Soo-Yun]

Soo-Yun's father describes his daughter as a very shy person and he sees this as a reason for him to arrange the meeting between the two families. She was not even consulted about such an important step in her life. Even though Soo-Yun had a good education and a good job in Korea, her father continues to portray her as someone who is silent and emotionally withdrawn during the

family meeting while other family members have the power to act on her behalf by asserting that the conditions are suitable for marriage. Soo-Yun's frustration and anger before the meeting resulted from her awareness of 'the existence of an unequal "emotional contract"' (Hite, 1988 cited in Langford, 1999: 15). She would have known that, if everyone supported the marriage, her dissention would be ignored. Even though she was surrounded by people who supported the marriage and were happy about it, she was in an isolated position with severely limited choices. Her family and soon to be family-in-law contributed to constructing her as an isolated and gendered subject, creating 'a hierarchy of speaking positions in relation to gender' (Adkins, 2002: 100).

Mi-Ran also explains how her decision to get married was a hurried one. She was introduced to her husband-to-be by her mother after she broke up with her boyfriend because her parents disapproved of their relationship. Mi-Ran did not have a poor impression of her ex-husband, but she did not want to be hurried into marriage after only a few meetings. When her ex-husband planned to visit her in Korea during his university vacation from America she told him: 'I feel pressured. I do not want to marry yet'. In order to escape from meeting him during the spring vacation, she went to Vietnam where her parents were staying at the time. However, he visited her in Vietnam and he was determined to convince her to get married. Even when they first met he used to wait for her in front of her house with a bunch of flowers until she came home although it was winter. Mi-Ran's ex-husband stayed in Vietnam for four days and even cried in front of her.

I was surprised. He cried because I did not want to marry him. [...] At home, my parents also forced me to make a decision. Before he went back my parents made me sit down and then said, 'It is time for your decision. Decide. Don't make a fool out of a fine man. Make a decision quickly. Don't drag it out anymore.' Their purpose [of her parents] was to ensure that I 'just do it'. That's it. Eventually I did it. I told them, 'Because I can't marry the boyfriend that I wanted, I should properly consider his [husband's] proposal of marriage. You said that this man is a suitable marriage partner. Frankly, he [ex-husband's father] does not

own a company. He [her ex-husband] did not even graduate from Seoul University [the best university in Korea]. His present university in America isn't the best either. He is not a doctor or a lawyer. I don't know how I can believe in him as a marriage partner'. [...] My parents responded, 'He is still better than you. Even though he might not be that impressive, he'll at least do something after graduating. What's more, there are his parents. His parents are people who would attempt to intervene in order to prevent potential problems in their son's life. They will provide backup and will support him. Don't worry about it'.

Mi-Ran's parents' pressure on her to make a decision and her uncertainty because of his social status are related to conventional, deep rooted images of masculinity and femininity (McNay, 2000: 41). Her parents' assurance that her future parents-in-law will provide financial support and backup for Mi-Ran's marriage indicates that her married life will be intricately interconnected with her future husband's family. Mi-Ran also resists her parents' pressure because of her own image of a good marital partner since she worries that he does not live up to the conventional masculine model of a partner who will ensure a stable life. In Korea, a woman's marriage to a man with a better social status is an important vehicle for social mobility (Kim Seung Kyung, 1997).

Mi-Ran's understanding of a good marriage as one that can give her social mobility prompts her to negotiate her choices so that she can improve her status through marriage. This consideration contributed to her decision to break up with her previous boyfriend:

I was never a good student and my parents thus pressured me a lot to marry a prosperous man. To be honest, I was a bit obsessed with living up to my parents' expectations through marriage. [Mi-Ran]

Since marriage is considered to be a 'family matter', it is difficult to separate Mi-Ran's expectations from those of her family. Marriage is both a way to secure a safe future for oneself and a family matter. There may thus be tensions between the expectations of the woman and those of her parents. When these

expectations are not in harmony, a woman can feel very uncertain about her decision to marry. The phrases the women use to describe the environment in which they made their decisions about marriage include 'strange environment', 'funny' and 'embarrassing'. These terms reflect their uncertainty when their choices were influenced by pressure to get married and by family involvement. However, the women's accounts also indicate that their own individual understanding of marriage affected the process. Marriage choices are neither clearly distinguishable individual choices nor family choices. Rather, these decisions tend to be both individual and familial.

4.3 A Man with good prospects

Women's stories also deal with the tensions between love and consideration of a man's social status. Women experience a complicated desire to balance love and material conditions rather than focusing separately on either one or the other. In order to explain this, I need to examine their accounts about the basis of intimate relationships in marriage, the meaning they attach to love (or their understanding of love), their decisions about appropriate marriage partners as well as their subjective interpretations of love and material benefits. When heterosexual women choose a partner, it has become crucial to balance his financial status and material prospects with feelings of love since they make these choices in a context where there are limited social resources for furthering women's careers (Farrer, 1998). I will use three women's accounts to illustrate this.

Soo-Yun, whose account of her family's involvement in choosing a marital partner was discussed earlier in this chapter, also talks about her individual reasons for choosing a man with good social resources. Soo-Yun's story about her parents' pressure and her account of her individual considerations do not contradict each other. Rather, it reflects the extent to which the marriage process and the choice of partner involve different types of negotiations and

pressures. Soo-Yun broke up with her ex-boyfriend whom she claimed she loved very much because she could not envisage a stable future with him. He had no stable job and he repeatedly lied about his social resources. Soo-Yun explains why she married her ex-husband.

Soo-Yun: When I decided to marry him, it was not like, 'Oh, I am so madly in love with him, I should get married'. My thinking was more like, 'Okay, he is all right. We can have a comfortable life together'.

SN: *A comfortable life?*

Soo-Yun: Being economically stable, I mean. He came from a very good family and had a very good job. His parents seemed nice and friendly. I had a lot of trust in his family background, more than in him. There were many things I didn't know about him, but I thought that was not a big deal. I thought, 'if he had this and that, our marriage would work.' So I decided to marry him. [Soo-Yun]

Soo-Yun's decision to marry him is the result of his family background and her impression of his parents rather than her feelings about him as an individual. 'A good family' leads her to make an emotional commitment and to trust him as a marriage partner. In my sample, 8 women said that the approval of their partners' parents and the men's family backgrounds convinced them that they would be good marital partners. One woman, Mi-Ya, said that she made the decision because she liked her husband-to-be's mother so much. She told me about her wish to build a new family with her husband-to-be as well as with his mother. This is an instance of how women's marriages are inextricably intertwined with men's families in Korea (Lee Jae kyoung, 2003: 114). This already implies that a new family in Korea is not just an entity with two individuals but one that also involves the men's parents, especially their mothers.¹⁰ Soo-Yun's statement that she was not seriously concerned by the

10. In Jang Jeong Soon's study of 21 divorced women, more than half of the women linked their reason for divorcing to the mother-in-law's direct or indirect interference and control. The women noted that their mothers-in-law were jealous and that this resulted in the sons prioritizing their relationships with their mothers over those with their wives

fact that she did not know her future husband well also reflects that marriage is about much more than the individuals' characteristics. For Soo-Yun, to know 'who the man is' is firmly connected with his kinship network. This knowledge forms the basis of her understanding of his past, his present and his future as well as their future. Giddens argues that the basis of an adult intimate relationship in modern society is 'knowing the self' and 'understanding the partner': 'intimacy is above all a matter of emotional communication, with others and with the self, in a context of interpersonal equality' (1992: 130). This is not applied in the Korean context. What one desires to know about one's partner is debatable and context dependent. In Korea, knowledge of others is not knowledge of an individual unit but it is more knowledge about social position. Soo-Yun clearly reveals that her knowledge of him – being raised in a good family and having a good job– was the basis of her choice of him as the right marriage partner. In other words, her choice of him is based on his background, his family network and his future prospects rather than on his characteristics as an individual.

Jo-An provides another account of the dilemma women face when dealing with the tension between love and external conditions, such as income, education level, housing, household registration, foreign connections, and so on (Farrer, 1998: 195). Jo-An married in 1995 when she was 28 years old, having broken up with her boyfriend:

We both fell in love so powerfully and were seeing each other for a year [a sad voice]. We shared so many spiritual things: we had similar values and the same taste in film and music. I loved him so much but he was too young and there was no possibility of getting married. We both wanted to live together. However, this was not really an option. He was still a university student and the eldest son, so he had to live with his parents and his grandmother after marriage. We purposely avoided talking about marriage [she keeps crying]. [Jo-An]

(Jang Jeong Soon, 1994).

Jo-An's crying shows how painful she still finds these memories of her ex-boyfriend and her deep love for him even though it happened more than 10 years ago. While she talks about her emotional commitment to her ex-boyfriend, Jo-An describes her primary reason for marrying her ex-husband as material benefit and the possibility of a better life for herself and her family.

Jo-An: He was never the man I wanted to fall in love with. He was just the right man for marriage.

SN: *Why did you think he was the right person for marriage?*

Jo-An: I have always been someone who is very driven. I did not want a husband who would hold me back after marriage. So I wanted to meet a man who could keep up with my desires and dreams. This man [her ex-husband] was almost like that.

SN: *Why did you think he was like that?*

Jo-An: Hm-Hm. First of all [pause], his economic situation. And even though his life view was not the same as mine, he looked like a person who could listen to what I wanted and who could support me. [Jo-An]

She finally made the choice between the two men when her future husband's workplace relocated to London. As she stated:

That was the turning point for me because I could fulfil my dream of having a better life in the new world. That new world was what I dreamed about. After that, I decided on him. [Jo-An]

The decisive factor in Jo-An's choice to marry her ex-husband was his economic status but her decision was also influenced by her concerns about her own desires and dreams after marriage. Jo-An's story reflects her ambivalence and the tension between her love for her boyfriend and her own 'dream of having a better life'. It reflects, in other words, the socially constructed

dilemma that results from negotiations between an individual's emotional feelings and social and gendered expectations of marriage that assume a man's worth is defined by his career, and a woman's future is defined by the man she marries (Kendall, 1996: 117-8).

Farrer (1998) argues that Chinese women's choices about partners are determined not by 'subjective choice criteria, but [by] publicly recognized facts about potential partners' (1998: 195). Farrer's contention, however, does not reflect the constant tensions and the ambivalence that the women in my sample experience when choosing the right marriage partner. They repeatedly negotiate between romantic feelings and potential partners' material conditions and these complex negotiations are shaped by their desire to do the right thing, or to be with the right person. Therefore, women's desire to get married and their decision to marry 'a specific person' reflects the complex 'web of practices' of the culture and family in which they are situated and with which they negotiate (McNay, 2000: 46). This is also revealed in Han-Na's story.

Han-Na had failed her university entrance exam and she was preparing for the following year's exam in 1987. During this time, she met her boyfriend whom she loved for a long time. She described him as very poor but as very intelligent. Han-Na decided to support her boyfriend for the duration of his university studies rather than studying herself and she opened a shop with her friend near his university. She explains:

I thought that it would be better to put my effort into him. Making him a better man, you know, was kind of my mothering instinct as a woman. I had the natural tendency of not liking men who were not smart because a man has to be responsible for a whole family. [Han-Na]

Han-Na's relationship was not based on what her boyfriend was like at the time. Rather, she focused on what he would be like in the future when he

would have become someone who was a suitable marriage partner. However, Han-Na's effort to make him 'a better man' did not turn out as she planned because her boyfriend failed to pass even the first stage of the bar exam. He said that he wanted to continue studying. Han-Na explained how she felt when he said this:

I treated him so well but he was still very young. In my mind, I was telling him: 'It is so hard for me to continue supporting you. You don't realise at all that it is time for you to start being responsible for me. What the hell do you mean when you say you want to continue studying? You have had your chance'. He was vaguely aware how much I worked to earn money but I did everything he wanted. Crazy, I was angry and got nervous. [...] I discovered that working was really hard. I felt so frustrated with my life. [...]. I said to him, 'Let's think about our relationship for a month'. I did not want to get married to him because he was so poor. At least, if I supported him so that he could study, he should have been prepared to assume his responsibilities after getting married. He had to be a suitable marriage partner. Otherwise I could not invite my friends to my wedding. I had not contacted my friends for a long time [She had lived in one of the richest areas in Seoul and graduated from high school in that area. Most of her friends thus had very promising futures]. I put all my efforts into having a better life through him, but couldn't see the future. So I decided to break up with him. [Han-Na]

His failure to understand his responsibility to her makes him an unsuitable marriage partner and this led her to start seeing another man. Han-Na started seeing another man because of her individual desires but also because of what Tokita-Tanabe calls 'social eyes' (2003: 181). This emerges when, for example, she says that she could not have invited her friends to a wedding with this man. In her attempt to develop 'aesthetics in which [her] desire and "social eyes" are the same', she said she turned to a man who was the manager of a company and had a sense of 'responsibility' towards her (ibid, 2003: 181).

He told me, 'I will take responsibility for you'. [...] At the time I met him, he [her ex-husband] was running his business and invested all his

family's money. But he was not in a good state of mind to run a business and was not confident in his business skills. He told me that he needed me to help him. His father also had a very good impression of me, saying that 'I want my son to marry a woman like you'. [...] It was important for him to succeed in his business, because his whole family's fortune depended on his business. I really wanted to become his wife and help his business. [Han-Na]

Han-Na chooses her ex-husband because she finds that he is 'responsible' for her and because of his better family background and material conditions. At the same time, she chooses her ex-husband because he 'needed' her 'help'. It is on the basis of these considerations that she constructs her identity and her social self as (becoming) a wife.

Becoming a wife for Han-Na means meeting a man/husband who is 'responsible' for her. Yet, it also means that she is becoming a 'helper', revealing her compassion for men who need her 'help'. Han-Na's story reveals complexities involved in women's choices of marital partners. Women I interviewed often talk about their compassion for men who need women's 'help', and some women pointed to 'compassion' as their main reasons for marriage. I shall briefly discuss these women's choices before I turn to issues of 'sharing' which emerged in some women's marriage stories.

4.4 He needed my help'

Three women - Jeong-Mi, Ga-Rim and Yun-Ja - described their main reasons for getting married in terms of 'compassion' and 'moral responsibility'. These terms underpin their perception that they were the only person who could 'help' their husbands and therefore they could not break up with them. In the first two women's cases - Jeong-Mi and Ga-Rim - this is related to political commitment and a moral responsibility towards comrades. The first story comes from Jeong-Mi. Jeong-Mi's boy friend joined a political movement and so he could not finish university; he was also unemployed and wanted by the

police. She met him in 1989 through one of her university seniors and got married in 1992. Jeong-Mi's story describes her moral decision to accept him as her marriage partner, even though she wanted to break up many times.

He talked about marriage after six or seven months of dating. He kept talking about it. I told him, 'I do not want to marry'. He was not in a good situation. He was not the person my parents expected. However, there was such a complicated situation [pause]. Well, he was having such a hard time. If I ignore him, I felt like I was committing a sin. So, you know, women have that kind of feeling, 'compassion'. Anyway, in those circumstances, if I did [break up], I felt I was a really, really bad woman. So we become like that [being married]. [Jeong-Mi]

Jeong-Mi considered that helping someone in need is part of being a woman; in this way her choice to marry her partner becomes a choice to become his carer. Another woman told a similar story. Ga-Rim explained her reason for marrying in the context of her future husband's desperately difficult situation; 'I felt 'compassion' rather than love. If I did not stay next to him, nobody was around him'.

Jeong-Mi and Ga-Rim's emotion of compassion comes from the partner's critical situation and their experience of political movement. Compassion becomes one of the decisive factors for Jeong-Mi and Ga-Rim to marry and also becomes the basis of remaining with the partner. Compassion is an individual feeling, but it is important to recognize that 'emotion is always *about* someone or something' within 'social context or personal relations' (Bloom 1998: 114-115, italics in original). Langford argues that the process of 'maternalisation', 'repress[es] or discount[s]' women's point of view, leading to self-silencing of their feeling which could bring their efforts being invisible (Langford 1999: 106) and I suggest this is also true of compassion. This process of self-silencing creates a situation where Ga-Rim, especially, waits for her partner to have a better life even after her marriage, leading to her long endurance in marriage (see chapter 6). Ga-Rim's economic and emotional burden in marriage eventually led her to feel angry about 'compassion', and

she revealed: 'These days, I often say that compassion is the worst human feeling'.

Compared to these two women, Yun-Ja is in a different situation in the sense that she was subject to emotional blackmail due to her partner's aggressive and possessive character. Yun-Ja also felt 'compassionate' and decided to marry him, believing that a proper marriage, and also a happy family, could make him 'a better man.'

I thought that if I helped him, he would change after marriage. [...] He was a smart man and he did not have 'a happy family' since he was in middle school. If he had a normal and warm happy family atmosphere I thought that he would be different. [...] To marry him is responsibility or compassion more than love. [Yun-Ja]

Yun-Ja's expectation of him changing after marriage comes from her ideal of a 'happy' family, which he did not have in his birth family and therefore after marriage she believed that if he had these conditions he would be a different person. However, this is underlined within her future emotional responsibility to give 'a warm family' to him, leading her to undertake a lot of 'emotional work' within the relationship (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993).

These three women- Jeong-Mi, Ga-Rim and Yun-Ja - talk compassion or responsibility as a reason for marrying. Their feeling is not about love, but more about the consideration of 'helping' men who have difficulty in finding their way in family life, aligning this with caring responsibilities.

According to Korean social norms, wives are helpers or supporters for their husbands who are responsible for them and the whole family (Moon Seung Sook, 2002: 86). Here, women's 'help', seen as women's role/responsibility, comes in various forms including 'domestic work', 'emotional work' and when it comes to men's business, becoming 'business helpers'. Seeing various women's domestic/emotional/paid work as 'help', it constitutes women's family work as 'secondary' to men's work. Seeing 'help' as women's role/

responsibility, however, leads, at the same time, to a moral discourse about a good/bad wife in Korea, which I shall discuss in more detail in chapter 5.

If the notion of 'help' is linked to women's gendered role/responsibility in the Korean context, the notion of 'sharing', which emerged in some women's stories of marriage, are centred on equality. It is to these stories I shall now turn.

4.5 Sharing

Equality emerged as the most important factor in five women's marriage stories¹¹. They married their partners because they were different from other men and they emphasized their good characters. In my sample, women's marriage choices are not determined by falling in love or by having chemistry with someone. Rather, these women's stories are centred on equality as the basis of personal fulfillment and as an important marriage practice or 'do' relationships.

SN: What was the decisive factor in your decision to marry him?

Sue-Mi: Umm. I decided for me [laugh]. I based the decision on my interests. It would have been nice if I had fallen in love. However, I did not have strong chemistry with him.

SN: What kind of feeling did you have?

Sue-Mi: It was not like being in love. On the other hand, I could share things I liked with him. I have always really wanted to be independent. He was a good man and he was more liberal than other men. [Sue-Mi]

11. This does not mean that the five women who included equality as major stories did not have deep family involvement. As I described, Na-Ri spent a long time to persuade her family and Young-Hee had serious daily pressure on marriage. Two women, Sue-Mi and Ji-Sue also revealed their concern about family.

Sue-Mi's choice was determined by her own interests and by her desire to be independent. In particular, she told me that she wanted to keep her job after she got married. This was a very important consideration in her choice of partner. However, it is interesting that she noted that she did not have chemistry with her husband-to-be. This reflects that, regardless of the choice she ultimately made, love and chemistry continue to be regarded as important factors when women explain their marital choices. Sue-Mi's emphasis on his difference from other men is related to her experiences with the other men she has loved. She bases her decision on her desire to live independently and she sees this as part of her ideal marriage. Sue-Mi's desire for an equal relationship also emerges in Young-Hee's narrative:

I liked him because he did not argue when I asked him to do things for me. He had a feminine character. [...] I have known and loved men who were very manly and had charisma but I had to be submissive to them and accept their opinions. [...] I found it very difficult to be submissive and to follow what they [other men] told me. It is difficult to be passionate with a certain man and to build a relationship with him. With charismatic men, relationships were never equal and that is why we broke up. [Young-Hee]

Young-Hee's various relationships failed because the men insisted that she fulfil her feminine roles. She asserts that love is different from building a relationship. This can be linked to the reality that heterosexual love is conditioned according to assumptions about femininity and masculinity. Socially constructed difference that 'positions men and women as complementary opposites [becomes] crucial for the maintenance of heterosexuality' (Jackson, 1999: 176) and this awareness caused Young-Hee to choose a man who was flexible about gender expectations. Mi-Ya had similar reasons for wanting to meet other men even though she had been in love. Women experience a gap between love and being in a heterosexual relationship because such relationships require practices with which they are

uncomfortable. Their narratives also reveal tensions between love and their desire for marriages of equality. For Ji-Sue, an ideal marital relationship of equality is one in which housework is shared:

Something I really [surprised voice] liked was that he prepared barley tea when people got drunk [when people stayed over at his house]. He thought that they might be thirsty in the morning. In the morning he also went out to buy bean sprouts to cook food. His house was clean. [She thought] it would be so comfortable to live with this kind of man. Men normally do not [cook]. [Ji-Sue]

Ji-Sue was very impressed by the fact that her husband-to-be was caring and did housework. The importance she attached to these characteristics reveals her desire for a relationship with flexible gender roles. Similar concerns shaped Na-Ri's decision to get married even though her parents refused to give their consent for many years:

He was really sincere. [Very emphatic voice]. He took care of his father so well when he was in hospital [His father was a patient in the hospital where Na-Ri worked]. We became so close because he gave up everything to take care of his father. Even though his mother and brothers could care for his father, he did everything. He was a very good man and we shared similar views about the future. [Na-Ri]

Na-Ri said in the interview that she only focussed on his good character and that she regarded this as the most important factor in choosing a man to share her life with. Another woman, Ju-Ni, also noted that she did not really imagine what marriage would be like but only wanted a man with similar views about life. Ju-Ni's statement that she did not have strong ideas about what marriage would entail is echoed by Na-Ri and Young-Hee. They all said that they did not really think about it, but assumed that they would be able to manage

problems that cropped up in marriage.

Women's emphasis on the ways in which their husbands-to-be were different from other men reveals their resistance to the dominant forms of heterosexual relationships and their desire for relationships that are free from fixed gender expectations. These women wanted equality and independence in their marriages and these changing marital requirements increased the pressure on them because they had the challenge of finding men who had similar views about marriage.

Although all the women's narratives focus on the different pressures that influenced their marriage choices, their stories also reflect how the marriage process exists within the context of their specific social and cultural locations (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998). Their stories thus reveal gendered differences from men's narratives because men are located in a different context and attach different meanings to marriage and the ideal marital partner.

5. Summary

In this chapter I have explored how love stories and marriage stories are articulated differently by men and women. The marriage choices they make are shaped by discourses of traditional/modern marriage in South Korea.

Moreover, women's and men's narratives of marriage originate from their different social spaces and situations within material, cultural and emotional contexts. In Korea, people's locations in these contexts will determine who would be suitable marriage partners. Family and individual expectations result in tensions between women's and men's ideals of marriage and social and familial expectations of marriage. However, family involvement in women and men is rather different. In my sample, men did not talk about daily pressure from their parents to the extent that women do. This does not mean that they do not experience parental pressure. Rather the different kinds of parental pressure

that women and men experience are related to their different social situations.

Women's experiences of ambivalence and tensions between individual choice and familial and social expectation become the basis of why their retrospective reconstructions and interpretations of their past focus on the factors that led them to making poor choices in response to social and familial pressure, and what they could have done differently to prevent their marriages from ending in divorce. Ricoeur argues that statements about inner experience need to be read with 'reference to narrative activity' (Ricoeur, 1980: 170). For these women, the main reference point in reconstructing their past is their divorces and the main reason for speaking about their past lives is to uncover the problems that caused and shaped their experiences of divorce. As Day Sclater points out, people's narratives are 'the outcome of a process in which the teller remembers, interprets, constructs and reconstructs events in the outside world which have been subjectively experienced' (Day Sclater, 1998: 87).

In social space and family practice, people become gendered individuals or gendered social identities (Morgan, 1996: 35). This means that to accept life as a wife or husband or daughter-in-law is to accept a different identity. This is not just an individual issue but is connected with the social support networks that assign different positions to men and women. The most important thing is that 'women and men create very different marital "realities"' and that this forms part of 'a gendered social world' (Riessman, 1990: 72). These gendered realities are reflected in women's and men's divorce narratives, as I will explore throughout the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

MORALITY: THE CENTRAL ISSUE IN DIVORCE NARRATIVES

1. Introduction

In chapter 3 I discussed the ways in which men's and women's choice of marital partner is embedded in discourses of traditional versus modern ideas of marriage and family life. The process of meeting the 'right marital partner' reflects the tensions between men and women and their wider families as well as the tensions related to differences in social status, cultural and material situations and the responsibilities that are ascribed to men and women in marriage. In addition to this, my central point was that marriage is considered to be the most ideal adult relationship and that the exclusion of other possible life choices results in the assumption by families and society that marriage will be an inevitable part of an individual's life journey. The equation between 'getting/being married' and a 'normal' adult life produces a social script that governs people's reactions to divorce. In this chapter I will explore the particular ways in which women's and men's accounts of their reasons for divorce are shaped by the fact that they are located in a context where divorce is stigmatized as a deviation from the ideal adult relationship.

2. Morality: The Central Issue In Divorce Narratives

According to Hopper most previous research on divorce has focused on the main complaints and the causes in marriage that lead to divorce and 'how [those complaints] vary historically and how they differ for women and men' (Hopper, 2001a: 435). Similar trends emerge in research on divorce in Korea, which tends to look at the fundamental reasons that were cited for divorce in

the past and at new reasons and complaints that have appeared more recently (Lee Hyun Song, 1997, 1999, 2003; Byeon Hwa Soon, 1999; Kwack Bae Hee, 2002; Lee Ju Hong, 2002; Lee Jae Kyoung, 2003).

What Hopper finds problematic is that most researchers, in explaining and categorising people's various reasons for divorce, do not pay adequate attention to how women and men constantly negotiate their motives or reasons for divorce in socially legitimate ways so as to avoid the stigma attached to their divorce (Hopper, 1993a, 1993b). Mills (1940) contends that the motives people impute to themselves and to others are not 'fixed elements "in" an individual' but 'motives are the terms with which interpretation of conduct by *social actors proceeds*' (Mills, 1940: 904, Italics in original). People, in other words, manage to tell their motives 'by ascribing meaning to the events, objects and people around them, and by mutually negotiating patterns of social life through which the world becomes intelligible' (Hopper, 1993b: 810). In understanding people's motives and reasons for divorce, we thus need to understand the condition in which people make sense of their divorces with others – the conditions in which people give accounts of their divorces to others.

In their daily and social interaction with others, divorced people often encounter the question, 'Why have you divorced?' Even though divorce has become increasingly common in today's society, breaking up marriages, which continue to be regarded as 'forever', raises a moral issue. In other words, the question is not simply about asking 'What happened' but rather about 'Why it [divorce] happened' and it required an explanation for one's act of 'breaking up' marriage.

As I shall show in this chapter, the conditions in which people tell their stories of divorce involve 'making a claim for a valid social identity - "I am a good person despite my divorce"' (Riessman, 1990: 119). People's storytelling about their past experiences of marriage and their decision to divorce is not aimed at

representing 'traumatic events' as factual. Neither is it 'a repetition of the events as they occurred' (Jackson, 2002: 59). Rather, people's motives and reasons for divorce are constructed and are produced through a constant process of negotiation in order to make sense of their past and present as a divorced person in a society where divorce is still stigmatized.

From this point of view, I first discuss some of the ways in which divorced people in Korea experience the stigmatisation of divorce in their daily life, and how this involves the splitting of 'my divorce' from 'their divorces' which is found in many divorce narratives. The ways in which people encounter the question 'Why have you divorced', is also gendered, requiring 'the gendering of moral tales' of divorce (Ribbens McCarthy, et al., 2003). Different ways in which divorced men and women experience, negotiate, and challenge the stigma attached to their divorce experiences will be analyzed in detail in this chapter.

3. Social Stigmatization of Divorce

The gap between the fact that divorce is prevalent in today's society and the enduring perceptions of divorce as problematic and immoral is the basis on which divorced people construct their stories as moral stories. Gerstel (1987) explains that, even though divorce has become common, divorced people are devalued in and excluded from informal social life. For example, Gerstel (1987, 1988) finds that divorced people experience a 'splitting of friends' or 'social exclusion' from the network of married couples. Gerstel also notes the ways in which women's and men's experiences of disapproval reflect a 'gender-based ideology of divorce and marriage' (1987: 175). Women with young dependent children tend to be blamed more when they divorce, regardless of their specific reasons for divorce, while men attract the greatest disapproval when they have affairs and abandon their family because of an affair.

In Korea, divorce carries similar stigma. The higher divorce rate means that there is a greater chance of encountering divorced people in any workplace and community. In Lee Myoung Shin and Kim Yu Soon's research, which is based on 151 married men and 235 married women from 2003 to 2004, 76.35 % men and 65.52 % women answered that they have personal acquaintance with divorced people (Lee Myoung Shin and Kim Yu Soon, 2005). However, people's attitudes towards divorced individuals has not kept pace with the increased likelihood of meeting divorced people. Even though people are more likely to consider that it is better to divorce than endure an unhappy marriage, there is still an underlying stigma towards divorce. Ok Sun Hwa and her colleagues (1998) found in their 1997 research that 70 % of the 716 people questioned, aged between 10 and 60, answered that 'it is better to divorce rather than have an unsatisfactory marriage'. Yet, detailed questions about divorce highlighted the deep stigma towards divorce. Most of the respondents answered that they think people divorce too easily and a little under 30% of them also said that they would not want their children to marry someone whose parents are divorced (Ok Sun Hwa, et al., 1998). Another prevalent idea concerning people's attitudes towards divorce is related to gender. In Lee Myoung Shin and Kim Yu Soon's research mentioned above, they asked women and men how much they worry about the possible problems in each category, such as stigma, economic problems, single parenting and legal problems when they consider divorce (Lee Myoung Shin and Kim Yu Soon, 2005). Compared to men, women showed more concern about possible problems in each of the categories, but the biggest gap compared to men were their worries about social stigma, followed by single parenting, the legal process and economic issues (Lee Myoung Shin and Kim Yu Soon, 2005: 69). This reflects that social stigma is also seen as gendered, attributing to women more problems to face up to after divorce, as I will discuss in detail.

Social stigma can be seen as an overriding factor as to why divorced women and men feel it necessary to hide their status. A survey conducted by the

Marriage Information Companies in 2007, for example, shows that 44.10% of 483 men and 67.86% of 476 women said that they had experienced situations in which they hid their divorces (Segye newspaper, 2007). Women were more likely than men to keep their divorces secret, and tended to do so for different reasons. Men's main reason was that they worried about the possibility of being disadvantaged in the workplace while women were more concerned that their children might be disadvantaged.

Divorced people encounter social stigma in their daily lives both in formal and informal ways where divorced people are marginalised from their community or social network¹². Gossip is one of crucial way of interacting and isolating people from the community or social network.

3.1 Gossip

'Gossip' is something that divorced people encounter daily and often makes them depressed: gossip, as the part of the daily social moral regulations, is what makes them hesitant to be open about their divorce. The 'fact' of having divorced can be linked to the possibility of becoming the subject of other people's gossip. Na-Ri, for example, knew this very well, as divorced colleagues in her work place had frequently been the subjects of gossip. In telling how she felt about the ways people in her work place talked about her divorced colleagues, Na-Ri said:

I felt terribly bad, and I was really depressed [...] Even though I did not want to hide it [my divorce], I had to [...] I knew that I would be the next 'target' of such criticism. [Na-Ri, Female]

12. In this chapter, I will particularly explore public stigmatisation of divorced people and in a subsequent chapter 7, I will analyse stigma in relation to other family members.

Hyun-Gil expresses similar feelings about the gossip.

I cannot help being concerned about other people's gossip... I often feel wounded when people talk about divorced people like, 'Oh, dear! Divorced people are like...'. Well, [He says of himself] 'I am divorced. So what? Am I that dirty?' I want to say this to people who make such bad comments on divorced people, but I cannot. [Hyun-Gil, male]

In analysing the ways in which gossip shapes the meaning and experiences of affairs, Morgan argues that 'gossip' serves as a 'mechanism of social control': it works as a 'confirmation of the shared lives and experiences of that particular social network' (Morgan, 2004: 23). For divorced people, gossip, as a form of social control, impacts on their processes of divorce. Mi-Ran, for example, reveals how gossip and stigma worked to delay of her divorce. Mi-Ran said:

The reason why I couldn't divorce, even though I wanted it for a long time was that there were not many divorced people around me. I thought, how shameful would that be. I would hang my head in shame. I will be the target of people's gossip. People will be keep talking about it [my divorce]. [Mi-Ran, female]

Gossip and social stigma related to divorce justify the perception of divorced people as lacking commitment or as selfish, irresponsible people who do not have the ability or make the effort to keep their marriages alive. Because of this, people experience difficulties in explaining their divorce to others (Sandfield, 2006). Therefore, divorced people's stories involve various negotiations and strategies to regain a sense of self-esteem within dominant discourses about divorced people as 'failures'. This is revealed by the fact that divorced people themselves emphasise the importance of commitment in

marriage as the way to acquire self-respect.

3.2 My Divorce is Different from Others

In a context where divorce is stigmatized, many divorced people also express their disapproval of divorce and they emphasize that their divorces are different from those of other people in order to highlight that they were not careless about their marriages and did not decide on divorce easily:

Hong-Sye: The fact that I divorced gave me so much pressure, and I could not go to church anymore because it was not the right thing to do as a religious person.

SN: *Were you concerned about what other people think or talk about your divorce?*

Hong-Sye: Of course. How could I ignore it? I, myself, do not like divorced people. [...] People tend to divorce because it is an easy way out of bad situations. But I do not think that divorce should be an easy thing. Divorce is not a good thing. I never thought that I would divorce. Even though my marriage had been so rocky, I thought that it would become better someday. I did everything to save my marriage. [Hong-Sye, male]

The ways in which Hong-Sye distances his divorce from other people's divorce is similarly found in Yun-Ja.

People have lots of prejudice towards divorced people. Personally, I also do not understand divorce on the grounds of incompatibility of personality. I think that people have to make every effort in marriage. Incompatibility is a normal situation to face at times in marriage because two different people are living together, and it requires work to resolve their differences. When people divorced due to incompatibility of personality, I think that they might not do all the best until last because they are so self-centered. [...] If people divorce after suffering a similar situation like mine – like their husbands do not care about family at all, and had affairs –, I can understand. However, if people divorce due to incompatibility of personality I do not think that they are

genuine, good people. Frankly I look down upon them. [...] For them, *marriage itself was not sincere from the beginning* [my emphasis]. In any situation, marriage brings some risk. If people seriously suffer from other family members, I understand but I do not [accept] that only two people matter. To have different personalities is just a normal situation that we need to deal with. [Yun-Ja, female]

Hong-Sye's consideration that divorce is not right and Yun-Ja's personal judgement on people who divorced due to 'incompatibility of personality' reveal stigma towards other divorced people, producing negative meaning of divorce and also judgements as what are acceptable reasons for divorce. As Link and Phelan argue, stigmatization works partly through the linking of labels to undesirable attributes and also by attributing all manner of 'bad' characteristics to 'them', separating 'them' from 'us' (2001: 370). The process by which divorced people not only feel stigmatised but also distanced from other divorced people indicates the supremacy of stories about marriage which emphasise commitment, and the endurance of marriage thus becomes an important way of acquiring moral justification (Sandfield, 2006).

Even though social stigma about divorce affects both men and women, the way people gossip about and stigmatise divorced people is gendered. There are different perspectives on the gendered expectations and assumptions of heterosexual marital relationships. The divergent discursive context and conditions in which women and men give accounts of their experience of stigma will first be discussed through men's stories and subsequently women's stories.

4. Men's Experiences

In addition to the general stigma discussed earlier, the main theme of men's stories about the stigma of divorce is their insecurity with regard to the ideal masculine self in marriage. Men were more concerned than women about

whether they would still be considered successful people after divorce.

I felt so small. I wanted to show that I wasn't a failure and that I had the ability to succeed. [...] I wanted to be confident in front of people. [...] At first, I wondered whether I had the ability to accomplish anything if I could not even keep my family together. I even lacked the confidence to go out and work. [Chul-Su]

When the family breaks up it tends to be seen as men's failure and is associated with a loss of masculine power. Chul-Su said that he did voluntary social work after his divorce in order to reclaim his social status or 'face' as one of the crucial strategies to deal with the stigma, reflecting his concern about being seen as a failure. Men's concern about losing face and ability to socialise after divorce also emerges from Kee-Jae's and Han-II's stories:

As a social activist, I lost the confidence to work with other people because one must be capable of having good relationships in order to work well with others. However, I already failed to communicate with my wife and I broke our marriage vows. I felt so incompetent. [Kee-Jae]

I didn't watch television for about two years. When I watched TV dramas that talked about divorce, I felt so down. Also, when people talked about divorce, I didn't want to join in the conversation. I lost the confidence to meet other people. I like to be seen as a man of character and don't want people to accuse me. [Han-II]

Men's stories about the stigma attached to divorce emphasise their sense of loss of masculine power and ability to function in public which can be seen as a failure in terms of the ideal heterosexual man in society. Therefore, for men, their principal strategies to overcome stigma are also connected with proving their ability in terms of the male role in public. As Hong-Sye also stresses: 'I

want to show off my ability after divorce’.

Compared to most of men who revealed their concern about social stigma, two men were not concerned about stigma and constructed their understandings of the end of their marriages around their claim to individual happiness. In discussing the social stigma of divorce, these two men raise questions about married people who criticise their divorce, challenging the idea that all married people are happy. Just as married couples produce their own views of divorced couples these two men expressed opinions about married people who stay in unhappy marriages as part of the process of reaffirming their self-value.

I’m not concerned about people’s opinions about my divorce and I choose to live my life with confidence. Who can live my life instead of me? I’m self-assured. Even though I don’t necessarily talk [about the divorce] I don’t hide it. I accept that people treat me as a divorced man. There is one friend with whom I discuss my divorce and he criticises my divorce. I say, ‘I’m so happy. Are you happy? You’re having an affair. I’m free to meet other women.’ [Gi-Chan]

I don’t think that there is a perfect marriage. Everyone wants to escape from marriage. I don’t think that all marriages are wrong. However, many young and old people in our country are very conservative. [...] Half of married people now get divorced. [...] After divorcing twice it becomes natural to break up rather than to stay in an unhappy marriage. So, now I don’t care much when people stigmatise my divorce. I find it stranger when people don’t get divorced. [Joo-Min]

Both interviewees argue that resisting the prejudice against divorce can result in greater happiness than staying in a failed marriage. Gi-Chan’s story criticises his friend for being unfaithful in his marriage, highlighting that adultery is the sign of unhappy marriage and emphasising that his divorce brought him more happiness. Also, Joo-Min’s moral claim about his choice to divorce is constructed as a critique of married people who do not have the ideal marital relationship, the, ‘perfect marriage’. Even though both resist social

stigma about their divorce, however, their way of claiming their moral choice for their divorce is constructed around the view of 'happy' or 'perfect' marriage implying shared dominant social understandings of marriage (Hopper, 1993a, 1993b, 2001).

The ways in which men want to maintain their power in public and emphasise individual fulfilment or happiness reflect the social constraints men are under to retain their self-esteem. For women, the social expectation that they are responsible for both keeping marriages harmonious and caring for all family members means that the social stigma around divorce places women in a different and difficult position.

5. Explaining women's divorce

Women's experiences reveal their struggles in relation to public perceptions of their characters and sexuality as well as their difficulties regarding custody of their children, and the challenges of explaining their divorces to others due to social views of ideal femininity and women's responsibilities at home. Social stigmatization will be first discussed in women who are not considered as 'victimised' in marriage. When women's divorce is regarded as motivated by their own individualistic happiness or 'selfish reasons', women found it particularly difficult to produce an account of divorce that can be seen as socially legitimate and which, therefore, enabled them to construct themselves as moral women.

The social view that judges women's divorce as selfish impacts particularly on women who cannot easily account for their divorce in a morally acceptable way. In the case of women whose husbands seem to outsiders to be 'good' husbands, who have had an affair or who now do not have custody of their children, greater difficulties arise in terms of being able to begin legitimate accounts of divorce.

These women are seen as fitting the modern mythology of the individualized selfish woman and are therefore more vulnerable to stigmatization. This is first evident in the case of women whose husbands appear to be 'good' men by Korean standards and therefore considered free of any 'fault'.

I went to many places to discuss my situation [she went to the legal aid centre for divorce]. They said, 'This is for people who have emergencies. The cases we deal with are when people could have big problems if we don't help as soon as possible'. They then asked me 'Is your husband violent? Or doesn't he contribute towards living expenses? Does he drink a lot or smoke? Does he have affairs? If not, why have you come here?' [...] My life was hell. I would rather want the man [her ex-husband] to hit me and to get bruised. [In that case] it would be obvious that he was doing something to me that was wrong. Nobody knows how much mental pain he has caused me. [Min-Hae]

Soo-Yun: [People think] I married someone who had everything. Why would you leave such a safe place? [...] It's hard to explain my reasons for divorce. Married people found it difficult to understand my decision. Some people have terrible economic problems as well as character differences. However, they don't divorce except in cases where they really have no money or if there is violence. Without extreme situations, [they think] why should I divorce? [...] [They think] I didn't suffer enough. [...] I felt like I was almost dying in marriage. I just wanted to escape from it. Like fresh air. We could not live without it. You know, we felt like we were dying. I was dying.

[...]

SN: *Did you find it difficult to explain your divorce?*

Soo-Yun: It is such a sensitive issue that I find it very difficult to explain the situation. [...] I felt paralysed. I joined an internet café and a social networking site [for divorced people] for a short time and I heard many people's stories there. Divorces due to incompatibility of personality are not such common things there. For example, a woman had an operation on her womb because she had cancer. So, her husband had an affair. The stories and reasons are very clear. [Soo-Yun]

Min-Hae and Soo-Yun's narratives clearly reflect social stigmatisation because of their divorces which are not regarded as 'extreme cases.' They describe their

marital difficulties with general expressions, such as 'My life was hell' or 'I felt like I was dying'. Both specified that they could not explain their divorces in a simple way and these women's difficulties in explaining their motives for divorce reflect how women's divorces are conceptualised according to a gendered dichotomy: women have to be 'victims' to men's 'villains' in order to gain sympathy (Lowney and Holstein, 2001: 34), highlighting the social judgement on possible or acceptable stories in society. These women's experiences demonstrate how the conservative power of culture and social reality ensure that 'certain stories become sanctioned and others disallowed' (Freeman, 1993: 185). Min-Hae and Soo-Yun's interpretations of their pasts and the stories they tell people in order to try and explain their divorces as morally acceptable and legitimate are thus inextricably related to social judgement on women's motives for divorce.

Social control over women's divorce is particularly sharp when women had an affair. Although affairs are regarded as unacceptable behaviour for married men and women, women's affairs cause them greater personal isolation and damage to their reputations. This reveals through Jo-An who divorced after having an affair. Even though both men and women use adultery as a reason for divorce¹³, Jo-An's adultery resulted in her isolation from the community and damage to her reputation, rather than being a private problem the couple had to deal with.

SN: During the process of your divorce, were there people who caused trouble, other than your husband?

Jo-An: There were others. There was a couple who worked in the same bank. They were very conservative people and they made me out to be a terribly bad bitch. The wife even came to my house and pulled my hair. It caused me so much trouble. Stupidly, my ex-husband told the

13. Women's and men's different interpretation of their adultery will be analyzed in detail (see chapter 5 and 6).

couple and they spread it around to everybody [Sigh]. It was such a hard time. [...] Also, I spoke to some very close younger friends and they then formed a very stereotypical opinion of me. They treated me like 'a person who is mad about sex and who is easy with men'. Behind my back, they talked badly about me. [...] Talking about my divorce creates many disadvantages for me. I don't talk about my divorce anymore. [Jo-An]

Jo-An's story demonstrates how women's sexuality can be problematised in both public and private networks. Even though it is not common for divorced women to experience direct attacks such as Jo-An did, their sexual activities can bring about serious risks to their reputations in their personal networks. This is related to Confucianism in Korea, which emphasises women's chastity and a woman's faithful devotion to one husband as the greatest of female virtues (Kim You Na, 2005). The social censure of women who divorce because they had affairs constitutes a form of control of women's sexuality.

Women who do not retain custody of their children,¹⁴ are also subjected to harsher social judgement than men when they divorce. Kyoung-Na explains:

People think 'How could I be a normal woman if I had three children and still got divorced?' [...] My husband's family wonder why I got divorced, and what was wrong with their son, because my husband was a good family provider; there was no gambling and no adultery. They think I'm crazy. [Kyoung-Na]

In addition to the general social stigma regarding divorced women with dependent children, two women also reveal their experience of intimidation from their husband and his family. Min-Hae's ex-husband sent an e-mail to the

14. There are three women in my sample - Kyoung-Na, Min-Hae and Mi-Ya - who did not have child custody rights. The reasons for this will be explained in detail in chapter 7.

governing body of the school where she worked. He told them that 'she was a person who abandoned her children and criticised my low income. How could this kind of person teach students?' Mi-Ya's father-in-law also threatened to report her to the Ministry of Education for abandoning her child. He asked her for two million Won (around £1,000) if she wanted to prevent him from making such a report. Even though it may not be common, the intimidation that these two women experienced shows one form that the social judgement of divorced mothers can take and the power relationships which make women's public life vulnerable. They tend to be judged regardless of their reasons for not keeping their children.

Gubrium and Holstein argue that the way to understand marital dissolution is related to 'the range of linkages with domestic order' and the gendered aspects of marriage, which becomes the basis for 'available understandings and interpretive resources, linking the issue of the meaning of divorce' (1993: 69). Divorced women are seen as having failed to perform their gendered responsibilities in marriage. Particular female characteristics are socially regarded as conducive to good marriages, and there is a general perception that divorced women do not possess these attributes.

5.1 Divorced Women are so strong

Women's 'good character' is one of the most important considerations when choosing a wife and a daughter-in-law (see chapter 3) and is also featured in women's moral judgements of divorce. Sue-Mi's story describes the social perception of divorced women.

Generally there is a really negative view of divorce. When I worked in a new workplace, [...] there was an older woman who was divorced. The men said that 'divorced women are strong'. [Sue-Mi]

Divorced women are assumed to have a strong personality, which could cause marital problems because the ideal woman is passive and submissive. This generally held view leads women to self-regulate their daily behaviour, to be a 'respectable woman' or to acquire self-value within a social network. Goffman (1963: 32) argues that 'one phase of this socialization process is that through which the stigmatized person learns and incorporates the standpoint of the normal, acquiring thereby the identity beliefs of the wider society and a general idea of what it would be like to possess a particular stigma'. This emerges in Mi-Ran's response to my question about whether she felt that people were prejudiced against her because of her divorce.

Oh dear! The gaze of the people was so stinging. For example, even when I behaved in the same way as others in my workplace, I might hear: 'Because of that kind of behaviour, you got divorced'. If I wanted to ask for something to change in my workplace, I thought to myself, 'They might think that I am a bossy person and that's why I'm divorced'. So, sometimes, I gave up asking to change. [Mi-Ran]

Mi-Ran's sense of stigma in her workplace is not based on other people's direct comments. Rather, it is based on her own sense that her attitudes and actions are scrutinised and regulated because of the stigma that is attached to divorced people. This reflects the extent to which regulation of the self works through the social discourses about ideal heterosexual women and men which circulate throughout our daily lives and become the basis on which people control their behaviour. People's way of speaking about divorced women identifies the divorced woman as being a specific kind of person which makes them different from a good wife or woman.

Dominant narratives support the idea of the divorced woman as having an improper personality, explaining her failure to keep marital life harmonious. This explains why Min-Hae distanced herself from other woman who were divorced as well.

I met one divorced woman while I was studying [after her divorce]. [...] I didn't like her way of living and didn't like her personality. After meeting her, I became more hesitant to say that I was divorced because I didn't want to be seen as the same type of person. [Min-Hae]

Min-Hae's concern that people might associate her with this other divorced woman of whom she disapproves reflects how divorced women are constructed as a specific group. Therefore, Min-Hae's decision to reclaim her sense of self-value by distancing herself from other divorced women reflects the same discourses of women's ideal behaviour and way of life. Women's personalities or 'strong' characters could also mask their marital problems and even result in them being blamed for their husbands' violence, as in the case of Young-Hee.

My friends believed what I said but people who didn't have a long-standing connection with me would accept my husband's word over mine. My husband's good and gentle image ensured that people couldn't believe that he could be violent and his version of events carried more truth and dignity than mine. Because I am a woman who looks like a 'Saumdak' [fighting chicken] and because I always raise questions and bring up issues, even my parents couldn't believe it at first. My parents said, 'Did he [her husband] do that? He could not have done something like that. Maybe, he might do something like that because you caused a lot of trouble'. Through the process, *the only thing I learnt was his power* [her emphasis].

[...]

People don't understand why it took ten years for me to divorce. [...] I didn't want to be hurt anymore. [...] I waited until he left me. That was the only way I could survive without too much pain. [Young-Hee]

Young-Hee's term, 'Saumdak' [fighting chicken], indicates the opposite of the idealised feminine image and her narrative reveals that 'investments in femininity' yield high profits in 'the institutions of marriage and heterosexuality' (Skeggs, 1997: 102). Since Young-Hee makes her strong

character visible, she is seen as less respectable because she so openly deviates from ideal femininity. This diminished her power and contributed to her suffering in marriage. Young-Hee's story reveals that in order to understand women's experience of violence, the social emphasis on 'leaving' or 'staying' hides 'the interactions of social structures that oppress women' (Mahoney, 1994: 61). As Mahoney argues, social discussions of domestic violence that treat "'staying" as identical with victimisation' do not reflect 'women's lived experience and the personal and social context of power' (Mahoney, 1994: 74). Young-Hee is clearly concerned about getting a bad reputation in her personal and professional networks. People could regard her personality as the direct reason for his violence. Young-Hee's expression that 'I don't want to be hurt anymore' clearly reflects women's cultural and social circumstances and therefore her 'staying' for ten years can be seen as the only way of saving her self-esteem in others' eyes.

The women's stories explored above illustrate how women were keenly sensitive to other people's views of them and felt they were judged more severely than men which increased their vulnerability. Women's perception of others' attitudes to their divorce is also related to the risk in the workplace and in the community.

5.2 Risk in Public/community

Some women noted that they did not want to be open about their divorces in the workplace because it might have led men to have certain expectations of them. In particular, they felt that men thought that divorced women were 'easy' and would thus be available for casual relationships (Jang Jeong Soon, 1994):

I found it very difficult to live as a divorced woman. [After divorcing] I went to work as an office manager in a factory. At the time, I didn't want to hide the fact that I was divorced. After mentioning it, my boss started to flirt with me. It drove me crazy. Even though I didn't do

anything at all, his wife started to become suspicious of me. So I stopped working there. I learned that I could never be open about my divorce. That was what I got. [...] I found out that it was very difficult for women to live alone. [Han-Na]

Divorced working women are at risk but are also regarded as a risk to other peoples' marriages. The stigma of divorce is thus about more than just saving face and dealing with people's comments (Riessman, 2000). It also involves constant negotiations for women to ensure that they maintain their space in public life. Riessman (2000) argues that understandings of stigma need to take account of social and cultural contexts and power in society. Women's strategies for when and where to be open about their divorces are thus shaped by power imbalances and gendered inequalities in society. Their strategies for managing their personal information allow them to resist their marginalisation in a social and cultural reality that continues to stigmatise divorced women. The risk of being edged out of the workplace is particularly acute for divorced women who do not have stable jobs. Women's concealment of their divorce is related to maintaining their life in the public sphere as well as the social stigma itself, as in the case of Kyoung-Na:

At the beginning of my divorce, I said honestly that I was divorced. Recently I don't talk about it because of men in my work place. There were many men who tried to seduce me. It was so stressful. [...] I hid my divorce not because I felt shame but because I was afraid of losing my job. If I had been working in a professional job and earning a stable salary, I wouldn't mind mentioning it [my divorce]. [Kyoung-Na]

Riessman (2000) contends that differences in women's status result in different strategies for dealing with stigma since 'social class carries with it privilege that affects the experience of stigma, strategies, and resolution' (Riessman, 2000: 114). In other words, there are variations in the social and professional experiences of different divorced women. Women whose jobs are insecure

adopt not talking about their divorce as a risk-reducing strategy as Han-Na mentioned 'If I had been working as a feminist activist, I might not be concerned about telling [people] but I can't tell them in my work place'.

These two women express their hesitation to talk about divorce in relation to their unstable jobs whilst Mi-Ran, who studied abroad after divorce and has a good job, talked about general stigma on divorce but not in connection with economic difficulty she could encounter.

I'm not concerned about economic stability or welfare support. I really wish that people's general stigma about divorced people could change.
[Mi-Ran]

As well as the risks to women's standing in the public sphere, the social stigmatisation of women can also be attributed to women's isolation from their personal community. One woman, Ji-Sue, reveals how she was angry with the reactions of her friends when she got divorced. When she was married Ji-Sue shared child caring with a group of very liberal and progressive friends. However, they shunned her after her divorce because they regarded her as 'a dangerous woman'. Ji-Sue explained that they gathered together for co-parenting because, when the women got married, their husbands became very conservative, even though they were progressive before marriage. When Ji-Sue got divorced, one of the women told her, 'We're getting on with our lives and enduring our marriages. Are you too special to do that?' Ju-Sue explained the situation with the other women as follows:

They [the other women] treated me as a dangerous woman and were worried that their husbands might have an affair with me. They worried that I would be a bad influence and that I would break up their marriages. [A shocked voice] [...] Everyone was suddenly on my ex-husband's side. Everyone thought that the family should be kept together at any cost and, because I broke up my family, I was seen as a dangerous woman [a hard voice] [...] They all talked about wanting

different lives so many times. They all have so many problems with their husbands. Nobody told me I did well. It was such a shock! [...] They were all too afraid of breaking up the family! I broke up my family and became an outcast. [...] They refused to give up their social interests and status. [...] It was terribly hard. [Ji-Sue]

Ji-Sue's anger emerges from her friends' hypocrisy and her individual claim that divorce was the right choice, which brought isolation from the community where she used to belong. This example reveals how married people worried about being affected by Ji-Sue's choice of divorce and produced a negative image of her divorce.

6. Summary

The stories above illustrate how divorced men and women experience different pressures in a social context that problematizes divorce in distinctly gendered ways. Divorced people reconstruct their past according to their present experience of being divorced individuals in a society which constantly expresses its moral concerns about breaking up a marriage and attaches stigma to divorce. Hopper (2001: 128) states, 'one's self in marriage gets articulated in moral terms via a discourse of kinship and domestic life, and also not surprisingly, so does one's self as a divorcing person'. The social stigma that considers that divorced people are social failures leads them to tell their stories in a way that makes them more socially acceptable individuals. However, the stories above illustrate how divorced men and women experience different pressures in a social context that problematizes divorce in distinctly gendered ways. In addition to general stigma towards women and men, men considered their self-value in public life whilst women revealed their various experiences such as social judgement on women's personality, possibilities of risk in their work places and difficulties to give the 'right' reasons for divorce.

The different pressures women and men faced regarding their divorces

become the mirror of how divorced women and men are constructed within the ideal heterosexual gendered relationship. Therefore, in the following chapters, I will explore 'how' men and women make sense of their divorces and narrate their stories in an attempt to answer 'why' they divorced in relation to their marital partners in the subsequent chapters. People's questions about the reasons for divorce are not simply because they are concerned about the symbolic meanings of marriage as forever. Rather, my data show that the question about 'why' a marriage ended is raised because people want to ascertain whether it was the wife or the husband who failed to take sufficient marital responsibility. I will thus trace the ways in which women's and men's stories and their constructions of motives and divorce themes are always already gendered moral stories of wives' and husbands' opinions of their different gendered responsibilities in marriage, regardless of who plays the main role in breaking the commitment or who initiated the divorce¹⁵ (see chapter 5 and 6). Women's and men's narratives about their gendered responsibilities are constructed by 'the culture in which it is embedded' (Chase, 1995: 7). Women's and men's different motives and memories relating to their understanding of marital problems are accounted from 'the social organisation of gender relations' which become the basis of major moral story telling (Day Sclater, 2000: 45).

15. There is some research that focuses on different moral stories and interpretations in relation to initiators or to non-initiators of divorce. Hopper (1993 a, b and 2001) particularly found that initiators emphasize that 'their particular marriages [are] false from the beginning' and on the other hand, non-initiators consider their spouses as 'duplicitous' (Hopper, 2001: 442). On the other hand, Vaughan (1987) explains that an initiator is a person who knows marital dissatisfaction earlier in the marriage and a non-initiator has more resistance to the divorce. Walzer and Oles (2003) focus more on the gendered dimension, in the sense that in many cases women who said that they initiated the divorce became non-initiators, in the sense that the divorce was caused by men. However, men as non-initiators become an initiator due to men's power over the divorce process and men's autonomous self in marriage. In my study, I do not focus on the difference between an initiator and a non-initiator as the major factor to understand women's and men's divorce storytelling. Therefore, the terms, initiators or non-initiators, are only applied in my thesis to refer to a person who asks for the final legal proceedings of their divorce.

CHAPTER 5

HIS DIVORCE

1. Introduction

In chapter 4 I discussed some of the ways in which divorce is problematized in Korean society and I examined the ways in which these problems are experienced and narrated by my interviewees. In this chapter, I discuss, in detail, stories of divorce told by male interviewees, focusing on the ways in which the 'cause' of the problem that led to the marital breakdown is understood and narrated by men.

Two issues that are especially salient in my male interviewees' narratives of divorce are those surrounding 'work' and 'intimacy' (see Table 8). While these two issues are also prominent in women's accounts of divorce, the ways in which 'work' and 'intimacy', as marital problems, are narrated are different (see Chapter 6).

Table 8. Men's perceived reasons for marriage breakdown

Name	Perceived reasons for divorce
Chang-Jin	Financial problems / His affair
Tae-Soo	Financial problems
Han-il	Financial problems
Min-Su	Financial problems / His affair
Kee-Jae	Financial problems
Hong-Sye	Financial problems
Sang-Chul (initiator)	Emotional Abuse / Wife's irrational jealousy
Hyun-Gil (initiator)	Incompatibility / Wife's personality
Myoung-Gi	Incompatibility
Hee-Tae (initiator)	Wife's irrational jealousy / Wife's alcohol abuse
Joo-Min	Incompatibility
Gi-Chan (initiator)	Emotional Abuse/ Wife's irrational jealousy
Chul-Sue	Wife's affair

'Paid work', as I shall demonstrate in the first part of this chapter, is central to 'husband' identities/responsibilities – 'paid work' and its related term, 'money', are central to men's attempt to make sense of their faults (or lack thereof) as ex-husbands. These terms are also related to understandings of 'intimate troubles' in marriages. Men who had no income or a limited income tended to link the lack of emotional intimacy in their marriages with their lack of income. Conversely, men who enjoyed economic stability tended to attribute the lack of emotional intimacy in their marriage as a consequence of their work-centered life. While Korean literature on divorce increasingly focuses on 'intimate troubles' as the main reasons for divorce, issues around 'heterosexual', 'marital' intimacy are not separable from issues around (traditional) gendered role divisions in families. By analyzing men's narratives of divorce, in which 'work' and 'intimacy' are narrated as closely interrelated issues, and the ways in which men and women differently narrate the relationship of 'work' to 'intimacy' (Chapter 6), I aim to shed light on how meanings of gender differences are clearly embedded in men's constructions of the divorced self.

2. Work and Money Problems

For men, the biggest single problem and one of the main emerging motives is economic problems related to their lack of work or financial difficulties. In Korea, men's unemployment and lack of consistent work are often regarded as central reasons for divorce. When men lose their jobs they are seen as having no power at home and this is related to men's loss of masculinity in society and seen as a crucial cause of marital problems (Park Hea Kyung and Guk Mi Ae, 2003). A typical headline in the Korean press is 'Less empowered men versus more empowered women'. The article goes on to say:

Due to rapid social change, women's and men's views as well as their sexual roles have been changing. In the past, men had a firm status as a breadwinner and the head-of-the-family. However, recently, due to women's economic participation, 'Men are even abused by women at home and get expelled from home' (Jang Hyun Jeong, 2005, my translation).

The newspaper article describes marriage as a relationship in which men and women's roles at home are constructed as binary oppositions. This assumption reinforces the notion that either one or the other has the power in the family. 'A zero-sum calibration of power relations' between men and women has directly caused a situation where 'empowering women has been seen as simultaneously *disempowering men*' (Collier, 1999: 127, italics in original). This 'zero-sum calibration of power relations' has been highlighted in one of the main Korean broadcaster's talk shows entitled 'Korean men's tears'. The talk show's main storylines revolve around men's isolation at home when they cannot earn enough money to support the family. This talk show contends that men do not have any place to appeal when they lose their jobs and that they are then at the mercy of their families.

There is a great deal of research in both the West and Korea about the relationship between financial problems and divorce (Booth and White, 1980; Andersen, 2000; Park Hea Kyung and Guk Mi Ae, 2003; Lee Ju Hong, 2002; Park Hea Kyung et al., 2004). However, findings are not consistent. Ross and Sawhill state that when a couple generates less than their usual income, when 'the husband experiences serious unemployment' or when 'the husband earns more (or less) than expected given his characteristics', there is a greater likelihood that the marriage will dissolve (Ross and Sawhill, 1975 cited in South and Spitze, 1986: 585). In a secondary analysis of survey data on married men and women in the USA from 1980-1992, Anderson found that, even though 'over 70% of the respondents reported at least one financial problem, less than 4 % experienced divorce' (Andersen, 2000: 20). The

connection between economic issues and the possible chance of divorce is thus different in each of these studies. In the Korean context, Jo Seoung Hee found that the relationship between unemployment and the possibility of divorce depends on social support and on the couple's relationship (Jo Seoung Hee, 1999). Park Hea Kyoung and Guk Mi Ae indicate that women's inclination to divorce due to economic problems is more related to men's behaviour and lack of effort after employment than to financial difficulties themselves (Park Hea Kyoung and Guk Mi Ae, 2003).

These studies do not consider men's gendered identity in relation to their social, cultural and material circumstances and they do not pay close attention to men's voices and stories. Rather, most of these studies are based on statistical data. I will explore the issue of economic difficulty by focusing on how men and women understand the same 'event' in a gendered way and thus construct different narratives about it in the process of divorce. Therefore, I do not dwell on the truth of the factual situation of economic difficulty. Rather, economic difficulty will mainly be analysed in terms of the meanings that men attribute to economic problems in their marriage and how they differ from women's views (see chapter 6). I will approach this issue by keeping in mind that '[m]eaning is not inherent to action but is the product of interpretative strategies amongst which narrative is central' (McNay, 2000: 95).

2.1 Hong-Sye's Story

The ways in which men perceive their gendered responsibility at home and how this is affected by economic problems emerge in their narratives through their emphasis on the efforts they made for their families and their tendency to emphasize that the family's income problems were not their individual fault but something that resulted from the environment, which made it difficult to pursue their career projects effectively. Also, men are more concerned with their wives' lack of trust in their abilities to improve their economic situations

than with the economic situation itself and they link this to their loss of power. Hong-Sye's story is typical of how men narrate their economic problems in relation to women's trust. It is also typical in the significant ways in which his narrative differs from that of his wife, Na-Ri,¹⁶ whom I also interviewed.

Hong-Sye married Na-Ri in 1995 when she was 28 and he was 25. Na-Ri's parents were against their marriage due to his unstable job, his lower education and also the fact that he was three years younger. Na-Ri worked as a nurse in a hospital, except for a period of about a year and a half when she was pregnant. Na-Ri graduated from university while Hong-Sye only graduated from high school. After their marriage, Hong-Sye worked for a salary for about a year before he started to study. Na-Ri initiated the divorce that was finalized by the end of 2004. During their marriage, Na-Ri took economic responsibility for the family whilst Hong-Sye spent most of his time studying or preparing for exams. Hong-Sye ascribes his decision to study to the pressure from Na-Ri's parents because he thought that his status was unsatisfactory to them. He thus made this choice for his new family:

SN: How did you feel when you visited your wife's parents?

Hong-Sye: I felt inadequate. My wife felt like that as well. I felt bad. So I thought that I should study.

SN: Study?

Hong-Sye: Yes. I lost so much of my pride. They [Na-Ri's parents] looked down on me.

SN: Did they put pressure on you? Or did you feel like that?

Hong-Sye: I felt.

16. I will provide a detailed analysis of Na-Ri's account in the next chapter in order to explore how they interpret the same events in different and gendered ways.

Throughout the interview he, however, repeatedly mentioned that the decision to study was a 'mistake' - he said that he should have earned money instead. These repeated references to money reflect his view that money was the main issue that led to his divorce. He, nevertheless, highlighted that he was not irresponsible about earning money for his family - his decision to study was for the family's better future. This reveals the tension he experienced between his gendered responsibility as a married man and the lack of individual ability which could designate him as someone who failed as a man. Hong-Sye mentioned many times: 'I have not shown my ability to her yet.'

Hong-Sye failed to gain entry into a university in Seoul and therefore moved to the country to study. He talked about his wife Na-Ri's loss of faith in him:

Hong-Sye: Even though [she] did not say anything, [she] was really disappointed. Since then, Chul-Ho's mother [He calls his wife by their child's name¹⁷] lost trust in me. So, everything was broken off.

SN: *How did you find that she lost trust in you?*

Hong-Sye: I knew. She was ashamed that I couldn't go to a university in Seoul. She was confident about university [to her parents]. I lost 'Chaemyoun' [face] with them [her parents].

Hong-Sye's memories about these specific events that changed the couple's relationship reflect the pressure he experienced, which is related to the identity of men at home. The pressure is not a question of his individual ability since 'Chaemyoun' is about the crucial impact of cultural factors on the pressure he experienced. Yang Sun Geun (2002: 78) notes that 'Chaemyoun' or 'Chaemyoun saving' is a term which Korean people often use and these terms are 'more relationships-oriented' and about sensitivity to the opinions of

17. In Korea, we do not call a partner by his or her name. When a married couple has children, partners use the names of the children when addressing each other. Before having children, partners are addressed as 'Nampeoun' (husband) or 'Anae' (wife).

others. Yang Sun Geun asserts that 'Chaemyoun can be defined as the appearance that people want to present to others, in regard to their status and roles, especially gender roles, in family and society' (2002: 78). Hong-Sye understands loss of 'Chaemyoun' in this way but he focuses more on moral judgments about how he feels that he measures up to the idealized man or fails to do so.

Hong-Sye constructs his first failure as the direct reason for Na-Ri's loss of trust but we do not know how she reacts to his failure because, as Hong-Sye admits, 'she did not say anything'. His pity for his wife is highlighted even more when both were unemployed because his wife could not find a job either. His wife had to sell bread as a street vendor.

Hong-Sye: I could not say anything at that time. I did not know how I could express my feelings. I just felt so sorry about the extremely difficult situation. So, our relationship was broken at that time. Since then, my good memories about her disappeared. All dreams were gone.

SN: *What kinds of dreams are you talking about?*

Hong-Sye: I thought that she was a woman with whom I could comfortably communicate. Her belief in my ability was destroyed and she lost her trust in me.

His constant trials of preparing for many kinds of exams and then failing them all before giving up his studies were also explained as follows: 'She lost all trust in me and I was very down'. It becomes clear in the interview that Hong-Sye's understanding of his marital problems is linked to the time when he first failed a university entry exam. He felt that everything in his relationship was broken. Interestingly, whenever Hong-Sye talked about his loss of confidence or his wife's distrust of him because of his repeated failures throughout their ten years of marriage, he reiterates the points to explain that this is when his relationship 'starts' to have problems, and Na-Ri became 'different'. In other

words, the relationship 'starts' to go wrong many times.

Hong-Sye's memories about why they lost the closeness in their relationship are related to his notions of what a man's identity as a family provider should be. He sees his inability to earn money as the cause of the loss of intimacy with his wife and as the reason why she stopped valuing him and trusting in him. Hong-Sye's understanding of money in relation to his intimate troubles in marriage and his wife's loss of trust is similar to the understandings that emerged in the other men's narratives.

2.2 Gendered Responsibility

Six of my thirteen male interviewees (Han-Il, Chang-Jin, Min-Su, Hong-Sye, Kee-Jae and Tae-Soo) pointed to their financial difficulties in order to explain their intimate troubles, while two of them (Min-Su and Chang-Jin) also ascribed their problems to adultery (see Table 8), while for Tae-Soo, the poor relationship between his mother and his wife was singled out as a cause of the marital difficulties. Two of the 6 men, Min-Su and Chang-Gin, had wives who were housewives. During his marriage, Hong-Sye did not have a proper job for ten years. Chang-Jin could not meet his family's living expenses because of his gambling and his small shop's bankruptcy and he relied on his wife's family. Tae-Soo was out of work for a year and changed jobs frequently. Kee-Jae had a good job for a few months after marriage but then changed to a low income and unstable job. Min-Sue did not have a job for two years and after that he worked as a freelancer with a low salary. Han-Il was not in paid employment as he worked as a political activist. Even though their accounts of divorce are very diverse and complex, a common theme that emerged from their narratives was their wives' complaints about their job status, and the loss of trust in them. In what follows, I will discuss how male respondents talk about economic issues in relation to masculine understandings of doing family/intimacy with their wives.

The ways in which men describe their economic situations as the main issue in their divorces illustrate how they perceive economic responsibility as a burden. Most male respondents expressed their strong sense of having gendered responsibility as the head of the family. Min-Su, for example, even linked his reasons for starting to gamble with his economic responsibility.

Min-Su: I did not go back home often [laugh] after marriage. Not because of adultery after marriage, but because of poker. Our relationship was not good due to the poker. [...] I learnt it around the time I got married. [...] It was such a stupid idea. I promised to earn 2million won [1.000 pounds] every month. [...] I thought that I could earn money through gambling.

SN: *Did you have a lot of pressure about money?*

Min-Su: I felt so burdened. [Min-Su]

In men's narratives about not neglecting their responsibilities, they focus on their economic burdens as men and they also emphasize that their families were not at 'risk' economically, as the following men's stories illustrate:

There was some trouble because of it [the economic problem]. She felt afraid of our future. So she told me 'It would be better to get some qualifications [to find another job because his job was unstable]'. However, it was difficult to prepare for other things because I worked even though I did not always get a salary. However, our situation was never so extreme that we could not eat. Anyway, we could survive. [Tae-Soo]

Min-Su: I made a joke [to his wife], saying that 'We would never be in a desperate condition that we could not have rice at home. Whatever I do, I am not a person who lets our family suffer because of it'. I felt terribly blamed. She didn't believe in me [Angry voice]. I am not a person who would let my family die. Whatever I do, I am not such a person [...]

SN: How did you make a living?

Min-Su: My father supported us. His business was good. There were not many troubles due to economic issues. Actually, I was not afraid of it. I did not feel like that. [She] did not understand that it was natural to receive money from parents at my age [Min-Su received money from his parents for six years]. It was natural. [Min-Su]

Tae-Soo and Min-Su understand economic problems as difficulties that do not cause 'extreme hardship' and they emphasize that their money troubles posed no serious risk to their families. However, they also reveal that their understandings of economic issues and those of their wives differ. Tae-Soo's wife asked about 'future plans or future safety' and Min-Su's wife did not like his dependence on his parents. Therefore, 'money' is not just an 'object/thing' that they and their wives interpret in the same way (Smart, 2007: 180-182). On the contrary, different personal meanings are attached to money and these meanings result in different emotions. Men's lack of awareness of the economic risks that their families face also reflects women's sacrifice and silence about their marital situation, as Chang-Jin's story reveals. Chang-Jin, like Min-Su, played poker. He was aware of his wife's suffering due to his gambling and was grateful to her that she constantly believed in him:

Chang-Jin: Since I started to play poker after marriage, our living conditions were very difficult. I made her suffer a lot.

SN: Did your wife express that she had a difficult time?

Chang-Jin: At that time, I was almost mad with gambling. One day, she told me that 'I only have Five hundred won [a few pence] to live on'¹⁸. Normally, she only considered my situation [At the time, his small business failed]. Whatever she was going through, she did not talk about it. She thought that I was going through a hard time and that I had lost my way. [Chang-Jin]

18. His wife did not work outside the home at the time as she took care of a baby and she often went to her sister's house to eat.

Chang-Jin reveals his good memories about his wife in the context of her endurance as he expressed that 'she only considered my situation.' However, the experience of his wife's endurance and her lack of any opportunity to express her feelings also emerged from Chang-Jin's comments about how he contributed to the silencing of his wife's voice:

Chang-Jin: Usually women want to talk when they have something on their minds even though men might want to talk tomorrow. Even while a man is sleeping, a woman wants to talk.

SN: *What kinds of talks are you referring to?*

Chang-Jin: In certain situations, when I did something wrong or did not come home [He often did not come home due to gambling], I wanted to sleep and I told her that I would talk tomorrow after I got some rest. *I really hate to hear a woman's nagging* [my emphasis] while we are eating. If I say, 'let's talk after eating', she becomes sulky and says, 'When can we talk if we don't talk when we eat together in the morning?' For me, I don't like talking. Most of all, I wanted to escape from the situation. Men are always like that. To escape from nagging is important. If we do not talk at breakfast, there is no time because men can go to work. Men and women think differently about talking. [Chang-Jin]

Even though Chang-Jin told me about his particular relationship with his wife, he connects his marital life with the differences between men and women in general and he constructs his wife's request to talk as 'nagging'. Men's reluctance to talk about 'family affairs' is more evident in relation to economic issues – some of the male respondents in my sample said that they did not even talk to their wives about changing their jobs or opening new businesses. Their unwillingness to 'talk' about their financial situation must be seen in the context of men's belief that family finances are their gendered responsibility. Most of men I interviewed viewed these things as solely their responsibility, and this helps to explain why most of the male respondents connect women's

nagging about their economic situation with the loss of their masculine value and of their manliness (see Moon Seung Sook, 2002: 86). They connected their marital problems with the discrepancy between their wives and the ideal heterosexual woman when their wives nagged and insisted on independence or challenged them about the state of the family's economic resources. In these cases the men felt that the bond with their wives was broken.

'Compatibility' is a crucial aspect of understanding the relationship between men and women in marriage and what they actively want from their relationships. Johnson and Lawler use the concept to analyze the meanings men and women attach to love and contend that '[e]mbedded in the ideal of intimacy is the image of two different beings finding common compatibility in a loving bond' (2005: 1.6). In Korea, men's understanding of compatibility with women is linked to women's submissiveness and dependence. In other words, inequality is an assumed part of the ideal heterosexual relationship. Therefore, women's confidence or independence becomes an indication of intimate troubles or of breaking the commitment of marriage.

When they do not consider themselves to be proper family providers, men thus experience a sense of losing power at home and they feel 'neglected' by their wives. Min-Su's story is typical of how men connect money with their loss of control over women:

SN: What do you think is the main reason for the change in your relationship?

Min-Su: After marriage, economic considerations are really important. If my ex-wife's family were much poorer than mine, my wife might not have been so strong and confident in her interactions with me. For example, she might not throw away food to train me (when he complained about food, she threw it in the rubbish bin).

Rather, she might be more attached and dependent on me. [...]

SN: How did you feel when you thought of your wife's economic situation?

Min-Su: I felt that she was a person who could manage to live well without me. [Min-Su]

'Breaking the commitment' or 'breaking the bond' can occur in marriage as well as through divorce. Min-Su's comment that she could live without him reflects his sense of separation from his wife and he connects this situation with the fact that his wife's family has greater economic resources than his own. Even though Min-Su's wife was a housewife during the marriage and depended on him economically, his unstable economic status and his wife's actions are directly linked to the idea that she wanted to 'train' him. Men's understanding of the moments or the events that caused their marital problems is related to their ideal of intimacy which assumes women's dependence or submissiveness. Han-Il, for example, told me that 'I could not bear my wife's character because she was so strong'.

Men's belief that their economic status can directly lead to their loss of power reveals that the pressures they experience regarding their economic abilities are influenced by social and cultural forces, as Hong-Sye noted:

I was always neglected [by my wife]. In Korean society, how much men earn determines their status in their family. [...] Because she was working outside the home, she could see many men. She treats me as a hopeless case. [Hong-Sye]

'Always' reflects his sense of being powerless. His belief that he was neglected is directly connected with the social environment and he sees his marital problems in the context of his wife's work. He ascribes the distance between him and his wife to her work, which is also the case in Kee-Jae's narrative:

Before that [her work], she only thought of me. After she started working she could see how other people lived and that could have made

her reconsider her own life. Before that, she was just happy with me.
[Kee-Jae]

Kee-Jae's story reflects how the ideal relationship between men and women in heterosexual marriage entails specific relations of power between males and females. In such a relationship being loved and having a bond depends on his wife's lack of experience and her dependence on him. This is regarded as the condition for their happiness. Therefore, his wife's work is seen as a direct cause of the 'trouble' in their marriage, since gendered performances are required to keep a family relationship intact and to guard against the fragility of marriage. Therefore, men do not talk about their individual characters in order to explain their marital problems. Instead, they attribute their marital problems to women's individual character traits. Therefore, they hope to meet women who are different from their ex-wives in the future. Hong is typical of this desire:

Hong-Sye: I want to meet a woman who is younger than me and whom I could lead. I definitely want to lead a woman rather than follow one.

SN: *Do you want to play the same role that Na-Ri played in your relationship?*

Hong-Sye: Yes. If she were born as a man, she might have been very successful in her work. In many respects, she is very independent and positive. Even though she has done something bad to me, she has ability. She is a great woman who resolves all her problems, which is something I might not do well. [Hong-Sye]

During the interview Hong-Sye expresses his regret about his wife who supported his studies and he regrets their economic difficulties because they had lots of debt during their marriage. However, his statement about an ideal woman whom he wants to meet also reflects how divorce reinstates masculine values and emphasises men's sense of gendered responsibility. Arendell states that 'divorce experiences were used to reaffirm rather than to reevaluate' men's

beliefs about the ideal heterosexual relationship (Arendell, 1995: 52). The men in my study do not simply see their divorces as resulting from their individual failure to be economically responsible. Rather, they associate their marital problems with their wives' independence or economic success and 'strong' character and they regard this as an indication of their loss of power as men.

Men's social selves as family providers become the most important factor in their attempts to make sense of their lives and their social selves as divorced people. This results from social and cultural pressure about what constitutes an ideal, successful and powerful man (Holland, et al., 1998). Thus, men's understandings of their responsibility as breadwinners are similar in all the men's accounts. However, the stories of the men who did have regular jobs and thus believed that they fulfilled their male responsibility highlight different concerns. The men who were unemployed emphasize their pressure and sense of responsibility while focusing on how their situations prevented them from fulfilling their responsibilities. On the other hand, the men whose lives were work-centred emphasize why they had to work hard for their families and use this to explain why they could not spend time with their families and how this resulted in intimate troubles at home.

3. Economic Success and Failure of Intimacy

3.1 Time

Of the seven male respondents who did not identify their economic struggles as the leading cause of their divorces, the majority told me that they consistently worked hard and long hours for the family. They highlight that their work-oriented lifestyles were the main problems their wives complained about.

These men trace their marital problems back to their work-centred lives and the fact that this prevented them from having time to spend with their wives. They link these factors to the problems in their intimate relationships. They emphasised that their lack of time was unavoidable since they had to pursue

their gendered responsibility as family providers. They thus ascribe their marital problems to circumstances that were beyond their individual control.

Different gendered responsibilities were often the basis upon which men, in telling stories about their work, reflexively justified what they did (or could not do) in the marriage. Chul-Su emphasises that his work-centred life was for his whole family. He told me that, for a few years, 'I only saw my wife's sleeping face when I came home' and he noted that he hardly had any time to be with his wife because he was so busy establishing his business. Chul-Su's reason for working is articulated as follows:

Chul-Su: In general, men do not see trivial things but they consider the bounds of the whole family to keep their family well. You know, I need to earn lots of money for our family's comfortable life. [...] As soon as I woke up I naturally started to think of the daily plan for my work. [I thought] You [his wife] manage 'jibanil' [family matters at home] and I focus on 'bakkannil' [work outside the home].

SN: Did you think that you and your wife had different responsibilities?

Chul-Su: Yes. If we focused on our separate responsibilities, 'someday' we would have a better life. I kept telling her that after my business became well settled, we could go out together, enjoy our lives. She said 'When we are already old, where can we go?' That was the main quarrel between us. [...] I thought that we could go out once I was able to employ other people [when his business settled down]. Now, it works without me. I can go to check in the morning and evening. I just waited for things to be like that. Then, I wanted to begin my life. [sigh]

Chul-Su's explanation of what prevented him from spending time with his wife implies that he was prevented from doing so because of his material circumstances. He argues that men and women have different responsibilities in marriage and his work-centred life was therefore normal. Chul-Su's story is typical of the men's explanations of why they worked hard for their families. Other men expressed similar views:

I devoted my time to work [after marriage]. To work was for success, including for *me and everyone* [his emphasis]. [...] If I think of the past now, I should have spent more time with my wife. In my generation, it was normal. When I look back upon it, it may be my fault. From the woman's side, it was needed. [She] wanted to go out. Nowadays, people go out to eat. At the time, if people were not rich, it was not usual. [Gi-Chan]

Myoung-Gi: Because I was working as a HGV driver, I woke up at 4:30 or 5 am and came home at 9 or 10 in the evening. [...]

SN: *How many days did you work?*

Myoung-Gi: Usually, I worked for seven days. That was a problem between us because I did not have time. I just thought that someday it would be better and I would have time for my family after settling down economically. [Myoung-Gi]

Men's repeated emphasis on why they had to work and their regrets serve to highlight that they did not have the power to negotiate between their working lives and their wives or their family members due to the 'demanding realities [of their work for the family] that routinely sabotage[d] those ideals' (Daly, 2001: 292). Men's views of these demanding realities are related to their gendered responsibility to work for their families. Myoung-Gi's mention of 'someday' hints that he wanted a better economic future for his family and it also reflects the pressure he felt from his family to settle down economically.

Through these narratives, men explain how much they worked in order to support their families and they emphasise their burden as family providers. We often see media reports that Korean men in their forties have the highest mortality rate from suicide and the highest stress levels in the world (Lee, 2002). This partly reflects the important Korean reality of substantial education fees for children and a lack of social welfare for families. All these expenses form part of the burden of individual families. This is an important factor in men's emphasis on their economic burden. However, men also conceptualise

their life as belonging to the public sphere and women's life as belonging to the domestic domain. They construct their lives in a way that distances them from daily family matters. Hartsock states that '[m]asculinity must be attained by means of opposition to the concrete world of daily life, by escaping contact with the female world of the household into the masculine world of public life' (Hartsock, 1987: 169). Men's focus on their work for the family in the public arena, which is in opposition to daily life at home, does not only reflect their economic burden. It also highlights 'doing' masculinity (Connell, 2001: 146) and the extent to which their self-respect or sense of masculine value is judged by their success in public. Men's expressions of doing gender included:

I really worked hard, like a mad person. I opened my own business after three years of working in an office. There were not many people who established their own businesses at such a speed. [Gi-Chan]

I bought an apartment three years after marriage. [If I tell people this] no one can believe that I bought it within three years. [Chul-Su]

If I think of the passion I devoted to my shop, I have not given such passion to any person I have met. When I do something, my passion and mind are so focused. Nobody could be on the same level. Whatever I do, I want to be the best. Even now, it has not changed. [Joo-Min].

These stories reveal that men's individual value as men is perceived in comparison to that of other men in public. Their doing of masculinity to obtain social status also becomes the reason why they do not have time for their wives. Men frequently make these judgments through comparisons with other men who have good jobs. This is articulated through Myoung-Gi's discussion of his wife's complaints that he did not do any housework and did not spend any time with her. She compared him with her brother-in-law:

My wife's brother-in-law is a very family centred person and he is good at cooking. [...] Travelling and cooking are his hobbies. He has a very good job [...] In their [his wife's brother-in-law and his wife's] view, I am a very unsuccessful person. I am a pitiful person because I only worked. [Myoung-Gi]

Myoung-Gi implies that having time with his wife and for cooking is not something he could afford. These are 'hobbies'; cooking and sharing housework are not his responsibility. This is Myoung-Gi's way of constructing his work-centred life and his lack of time as an unavoidable situation¹⁹.

However, men's internalized and embodied understandings of masculinity, which become the basis on which they interpret their life in public and their need to work to make more money, also shape their belief that they have to be superior to their wives in the private realm (Kaufman, 1994: 146). Therefore, when their wives earn larger salaries men feel that they lose their power. This emerges from Hyun-Gil's narrative:

When she started to earn more money than me, I felt so inadequate. I felt that she wanted me to obey her and agree with her opinions.

Men's sense of masculine value in relation to their wives and families is constructed in terms of their different gendered roles as family providers. They accomplish this sense of masculine value by doing masculinity and they highlight that it is their burden and responsibility while defining intimate troubles as 'trivial issues'.

19. Myoung-Gi's belief that sharing housework and cooking tasks are not his responsibility reflects general social assumptions. In my sample, only 3 of the 13 men said that they did housework when they have time. However, even when men did so it was regarded as 'helping' or 'supporting' women in fulfilling their responsibilities.

3.2 Trivial Issues

Men see their work as the direct reason why they could not have successful intimate relationships with their wives. However, their work does not only mean their jobs but it also includes their social activities, which they regard as part of their work. In Korea men's social gatherings after working hours are still considered as an extension of work. Chul-Su expressed how personal networking is important for his business:

Men's lives are social. Men cannot focus on family matters inside the home. To improve our social status, we need to meet people who have a better status. I cannot socialize with people who have a lower social status than me. Through meeting, we become like friends and share 'Jeong' [companionship]. So, when I need some help, we can help each other. All social life is connected through personal networks in order to survive in a society. We cannot live [without it]. She did not understand this well enough. [Chul-Su]

Chul-Su's emphasis on personal networking for his work can be extended to men's 'Room Salon'²⁰ culture. Through this culture men normalise their meetings with other women, as Gi-Chan's story reveals:

Because she loved me so much, she was obsessed with me. For example, it caused her to suspect me of adultery. I came home very late. Because of my business I have to treat people in a 'Room Salon.' Because of drinking for business purposes, I came home very late. So, she suspected me of having an affair. [...] She suspected everyone of having affairs without distinguishing between the business thing and

20. This is a Korean term and means a drinking house in which women are employed as hostesses. In a 'Room Salon', all kinds of sexual acts are allowed except for sexual intercourse.

the personal matter. She drove me crazy. [Gi-Chan]

Men's descriptions of their need to maintain personal networks emphasise that everything they do outside the home is related to their work and that it is not their individual choice to drink or to go to 'Room Salon'. This partly reflects cultural forces in Korea as Cho states that 'power and opportunities in society are determined according to one's position within quasi personal networks' (Cho Han Hae Joang, 2000: 52). The way that men perceive their wives as asking 'too much' of them reflects Korean culture where a married couple's intimate relationship is based on roles with a strict binary separation between work and leisure (Kim You Na, 2005: 149). This also allows men to use social and cultural pressures to justify their absence from home, as Myoung-Gi states:

Because men are social animals, they invest more time in social activities than women, so women are 'inside people' and men are 'outside people'. When men work outside the home, they have to be concerned about all people. [Myoung-Gi]

Men's accounts of not having time with their wives are marked by a distinction between a 'big fault' and a 'trivial fault'. Their accounts of their lack of time for intimate relationships are related to Scott and Lyman's explanation of two kinds of accounts, namely 'excuses and justifications' (Scott and Lyman, 1968: 47). Scott and Lyman note that justification is a way of taking responsibility for one's actions where people deny 'the pejorative quality' of their acts. Excuses are related to people's explanation where they acknowledge that their act was wrong but deny full responsibility (Scott and Lyman, 1968: 47). Men mobilize excuse and justification simultaneously. They excuse their lack of time with their wife because they cannot help that they have to work long hours but they also simultaneously justify it on the grounds that, in any case, work is more important than the 'trivial issues' that women complain about.

Men accept their fault but they refuse to take full responsibility as individuals. They highlight the social environment they have to confront. This distinction emerges in the following three men's narratives about their divorces when they try to explain what faults they had that could have led to the breakdown of their marriages:

It may be my fault that I did not pay attention to my wife because of my work. Of course, that would be my fault. But did I have an affair? Did I gamble? What was so wrong? [Angry voice] [...] As I told you before, I know that even though I came home late, I should have tried to connect with my wife. So, there was something wrong. However, it was not a large issue like sleeping with other women. It was not like that. [Gi-Chan]

In my mind, I only lived for my family and children. 'Why did I have to go through such a betrayal?' [A long sigh] I was so absent minded. If I had neglected my family, there might be something to blame me for. As a man, I tried my best to live well but it happened like this. Sometimes, I think 'in the world, is there a God?' I resent God. [Empty laugh] [Chul-Su]

When I divorced, something I would ask people [pause] is: Who in the world wants to work? Everyone wants to rest comfortably. One only works hard for the family. Everyone prefers to rest. [There is] not a person who only wants to work. Korean men work very hard. Who else works like Korean men? [Myoung-Gi]

These men's narratives of 'a big fault' or 'a trivial fault' are already shaped by cultural notions of the ideal male identity in the family. These cultural expectations influence the emphasis the men place on how they tried to fulfil their gendered responsibility for their families as they asked: What is my big fault? Who wants to work hard? They insisted that they only lived for their families. Men's understandings of 'a trivial fault', such as their limited time, poor sexual relationship or lack of conversation, reflect changing or conflicting

meanings of intimacy. Their emphasis on their work for their families and their lack of time due to the social activities they have to engage in as men becomes the basis on which they explain their marital problems. Their particular ways of understanding their lack of leisure and time in the context of women's and men's different roles regulate their relationship with their wives, prohibiting forms of emotion, attachment and pleasure (Connell, 2005: 85). However, it must also be kept in mind that men's understandings of different roles for women and their way of interpreting intimate relationships are based on masculine priority, constructing women as 'lacking in respect of rationality' or 'more emotional' in comparison with men (Lloyd, 1989: 116). This directly links with men's understanding of intimate troubles in marriage as they neglect unequal gendered relationships and naturalize women's and men's difference without looking at the social practices and norms that perpetuate heterosexual marital life.

3.3 Wives Who Ask 'Too much'

Men's understandings of intimate relationships are constructed in terms of 'sex difference' which, in turn, is constructed in terms of an oppositional binary and which forms part of a "'masculinised" negotiation of divorce', through which they attempt to understand their marital problems in relation to women (Collier, 1999: 132-3). Men's descriptions of their poor intimate relationships reflect their belief in sex differences and male superiority (Arendell, 1995). They thus regard women's requests for better marital relationships as indicative of women's tendency to ask 'too much' or as signs of obsession and a lack of understanding of men's social lives. They also link it with women's depression or personal problems. Crawford states that the '[w]omen-as-problem framework relies on a belief in deep-seated and enduring sex differences in personality, social skills, motivation, and goals' (Crawford, 2004: 64). Men's belief that women's desire to maintain love relationships can

be ascribed to sex differences can be seen in Chul-Su's story:

At the beginning, we agreed to open [our business]. She suddenly started feeling bored [at work]. She felt bored at home as well. After trying for a while, she said she was frustrated because she could not go out. I thought she meant it [her wish to go out] as a joke. [I told her] 'to live well with our children, we need to work. How could we spend money in vain?' [...] Anyway, when we did not have money, we were just busy and had no spare time. But after earning lots of money, whatever she wanted, she could go buy and whatever the children needed, we could provide for them. We lived in affluence. Then she left me - as it is commonly called, she went looking for love or her own happiness. Perhaps she started to wonder, 'Why am I living like this?' She must have been bored again. [Chul-Su]

Chul-Su's statement that 'they were just busy' reinforces his repeated claims that his work was for his family and he implies that his wife was not as concerned about their family. He connects their marital problems to his wife's desire for happiness and love. Chul-Su's comments about looking for love refer to his wife's affair and their resultant divorce²¹. He does not acknowledge that she might have struggled with her identity as a mother or as a wife. Rather, he sees her as someone who is overly emotional or who was merely bored. Joo-Min's wife did not have an affair but his understanding of her actions is similar to how Chul-Su described his wife's reasons.²²

Before our divorce, she told me that she wanted to have more experience and wanted to study abroad. When she initially told me this my first thought was that she wanted to study. I then thought that when she said she wanted to have more experience she actually meant that she wanted to leave me. [He thought about how his wife sees him]

21. I will examine his description of his wife's affair in more detail later.

22. The next story is based on his narrative about his first divorce. He has been divorced twice but he understood both experiences in the context of his ex-wives' desire to study or to have different experiences after divorce.

'You do not have a vision. It is not fun to live with you. To live with you is so boring'. [...] Wanting to have experience might mean that she wants to have sex and fall in love with other men as well as to study.
[Joo-Min]

While men admit that their intimate relationships failed because their work-centred lives prevented them from investing time in their marriages, they trace their wives' wish to divorce back to women's individual attributes. Lavin states that husbands often link their wives' behaviour to unstable, internal causes (Lavin, 1987: 77) and they tend to give women less credit for positive behaviour. Men also identify women with love and feelings, which they see as feminine characteristics (c.f. Cancian and Gordon, 1988) and they connect women's alleged depression with the failure to find the love they desire, as in Gi-Chan's account:

SN: *What do you think is the most important thing in marriage?*

Gi-Chan: Basically, it [marriage] means working together. Without trust there can be no relationship. [...] There are different roles to pursue. Separate but together. [...] It does not work when one person is obsessed with the other person. [angry voice]

SN: *What do you mean by obsession?*

Gi-Chan: She always wants me to come home early. Honestly speaking, she had depression. She was obsessed with me. She loved me too much. [Gi-Chan]

Gi-Chan's description of 'separate but together' reflects how he perceives women's and men's relationships at home. His comment that she loved him 'too much' or that she had 'depression' is related to his belief that she interfered in his public life. Almost half of the male interviewees mentioned that their wives asked 'too much' of them and they linked these demands to their wives' depression and to 'incompatibility of personality'. Men reveal very negative images of their wives. Two men, Hee-Tae and Sang-Chul,

attribute their divorces to their wives' irrational jealousy and they insist that their wives had psychological problems. Hee-Tae and Sang-Chul suffered a great deal because of their wives' daily accusations about their alleged infidelity and their narratives of their wives' depression should thus be interpreted differently from those of other men who also insisted that their wives had psychological problems. However, all the links men make between their marital problems and their wives' alleged psychological problems neglect to consider how their public centred-lives could lead to women's unhappiness or concerns about their infidelity. Hee-Tae's story is typical of this:

Hee-Tae: Three months after we got married, she started having irrational fears that I was having an affair. She was scared that I would meet other women at work.

SN: How did you and your wife spend time together after you got married?

Hee-Tae: I am an introvert, so when I came home I did not talk about 'Bakanil' [public life]. We did not have special things to discuss. We just watched TV and sometimes we talked about things that happened in the neighbourhood.

SN: How did you feel when she suspected you of having an affair? Did you ever think that she might have wanted something more from you?²³

Hee-Tae: I did not think that she wanted something from me. Rather, I thought that she had mental problems. If I had thought that she needed something more from me, I could have tried to give her what she wanted. However, I did not realize it. [He thought] She had a kind of mental problem or is like 'psycho' because she did not understand that I had to have a public life and that I had to meet women at work.

Hee-Tae attributes his wife's doubts about his fidelity at work to her lack of understanding of the social environment and these assumptions prevent him from trying to understand what his wife needs and wants from their

23. I asked this question because he told me that he never discussed his feelings with his wife and he never told her that he loved her.

relationships²⁴. Myoung-Gi's narrative is typical in this regard:

It is better to work. The reason we divorced was because she did not work. She only indulged herself at my expense. [...] If she had worked, it might not have been like that. It is better to work and have a good relationship with people. [Myoung-Gi]

Men explain the failure of their intimate relationships by identifying 'some problems' with their wives and they imply that these 'problems' could be solved if their wives were to change. Men thus understand their marital problems in relation to their wives' personal problems. They express this by, for example, describing their wives' characters as obsessive by diagnosing them depressed and by noting that this is a psychological problem. Men also explain their intimate problems by describing the differences in the ways in which men and women communicate.

3.4 Communication

The majority of men mentioned that women never forgot arguments and they emphasised that this was very different from the way men dealt with arguments. Men's repeated emphasis on different emotional and communication skills also reflects that the ways in which women and men experience and express emotions are 'part of the performative practices of the gendered self' (Lupton, 1998: 105). This emerges from Chul-Su's story:

24. Among 13 men, only Tae-Soo's wife took medicine that was prescribed for psychiatric symptoms because she suffered from depression, which was attributed to the continuous trouble with her mother-in-law. Even though Tae-Soo knew what caused his wife's depression, he told me that her mental instability was to blame. I will discuss the clear differences between women's and men's understanding of depression in chapter 6.

Chul-Su: She remembered everything I said to her and never forgot. [She] holds on to everything that I ever did that hurt her.

SN: *What did she remember?*

Chul-Su: I don't notice such things. They are trivial things. When she did not treat my mother well, [I asked her] 'How could you treat [my mother] like that?' She remembers such a small thing and holds on to it. Because of her pride, she does not express things but just keeps it inside. Even though I did it unconsciously, she felt wounded. She takes everything so seriously. Why does she need to hold on to such things? Life would be so much easier if she could forget things. [Chul-Su]

Chul-Su complains that she remembered everything they argued about and he sees their marital problems as resulting from his wife's characteristic of holding on to past arguments. Myoung-Gi is similar in his emphasis on how men forget very easily:

Men forget very easily. That is the difference between men and women. Women will hold on to one word forever. Even when women say spiteful things, [men] do not remember it much. [...] When I went to visit my wife's family's home, she told me how she felt wounded because of me and remembered what we argued about. I told her 'You have such a good memory [cynical voice]' [...] That woman [his ex-wife] might still be talking about me, saying 'that man...'. [Myoung-Gi]

Both Chul-Su and Myoung-Gi emphasise how men differ from women in the sense that men do not care about trivial things and easily forget arguments. They do not regard the arguments themselves as the main cause of their marital problems. Rather, they ascribe their problems to the different ways in which men and women deal with arguments. They do not focus on what they could have changed about the way they handled their arguments but mainly see women's characteristics as the problem. These comments can be traced back to their belief that 'real men do not show their feelings' (Pease, 2002: 77). Chul-

Su explains his unwillingness to communicate in the context of his maleness:

SN: Did you talk about your daily feelings with your wife?

Chul-Su: I did not express it. In my mind, I always thanked her.

SN: Did she want you to express your feelings more?

Chul-Su: When people express daily feelings so often they are often talking about shallow feelings rather than real deep feelings. To talk about small things is so small minded. As a man, to express often is not good. [Chul-Su]

Men's insistence that it is natural for men not to express their feelings about 'small things' allows them to justify their lack of understanding of women's emotions. Gi-Chan explains that he was angry and could not stand his wife's repeated references to his 'possible affair'. His wife had these suspicions because he went to a 'Room Salon' very often due to his business:

SN: Is there any particular thing that your ex-wife could have done differently that would have prevented you from divorcing her?

Gi-Chan: The way she doubted me. I asked my wife 'why do you live with me?' It was just crazy. When the hostess in the 'Room Salon' rang me, it was obviously not a good thing. My wife asked me 'what did you do with them that makes them ring you?' Of course, it was my mistake. However, if you think about it in another way, it is not a big thing. That is their business. They did it. I did not do it. When they rang me, my wife talked the issue to death. [Gi-Chan]

Gi-Chan did not talk about how his wife might have felt when the hostess rang him. He stressed that it was part of their business to ring him and that going to the 'Room Salon' was part of his business. He thus implies that his wife lacked understanding of his public life. Men understand daily marital problems in the context of men's and women's 'natural' differences, particularly in terms of communication problems and women's lack of understanding about men's

social life. Men's emphasis on women's and men's difference reveals their belief that they do not need to change the way they behave in their intimate relationships. Neither do the men acknowledge the gendered structure of marriage. None of the men mentioned that the power dynamics of marital relationships could be a problem while most of the women considered this to be one of the crucial problems (see Chapter 6). Arendell states that 'men typically are less aware than women of the dynamics of power in their marital relations' (Arendell, 1995: 54). In these ways men explain their inexpressiveness and judge women's wish to talk as 'nagging' behaviour or as women being overly expressive. This emerges in Myoung-Gi's story about what his wife told him when she asked for a divorce:

Myoung-Gi: She kept asking for a divorce.

SN: *What was the reason?*

Myoung-Gi: [She said] 'You do everything the way you want. It's like you live alone, doing everything you want. [Myoung-Gi]

During the interview, Myoung-Gi mentioned their daily arguments about his lack of time at home as well as his wife's complaint that he did as he wanted. Myoung-Gi explained the reason why he did not discuss family matters:

I thought of my wife as part of my body. [...] I considered my mind to be her mind. [...] Also, I do not want her to interfere in 'bakkannil' [men's life in public]. I do not want to hear her nagging about men's issues. [Myoung-Gi]

Even though Myoung-Gi says that he did not find it necessary to discuss daily matters because his wife was like a part of his body, he also emphasises that he did not want her to interfere in men's issues. He thus justifies his inexpressiveness as 'a defensive strategy' (Pease, 2002: 81) to resist his wife's

requirement that he should talk about things.

As we have seen, men's understandings of intimate relationships and their perceived motives for divorce constantly produce 'a masculine version of themselves' (Johnson, 2005: 99). Their understandings of their relationships with their wives come to mirror the fundamental principles of heterosexuality 'by aligning men with a *normative version* of what it means to be a heterosexual man' (Johnson, 2005: 99, italics in original). Jackson suggests that the institution of heterosexuality is constructed in a context of 'the assumed normality of specific forms of social and sexual relations between women and men' (Jackson, 1999: 5). These specific norms of gendered relationships are also related to how men understand their sexual relationships as well as how they interpret their affairs.

4. Sex and Relationship

The male interviewees' views of their sexual relationships with their wives and their understandings of affairs are shaped by their belief that men have autonomous and 'natural drives'. Jackson and Scott state that '[s]exuality as a drive is masculine, autonomous, goal driven, rational as opposed to the feminine, emotional side which threatens autonomy' (Jackson and Scott, 1997: 554)²⁵. Men's narratives about their affairs and their understandings of sexual relationships in marriage are situated within particular social contexts which are related to 'broader discourses, cultural narratives or "sexual stories"' as well as to power relations in marriage (Duncombe and Marsden, 1996: 222). Therefore, I will explore how men construct their affairs and sexual relationships in marriage as aspects of their masculine selves in order to

25. Johnson explains that love is not a 'natural' process but that it involves 'doing' love in the sense that there is a 'socially constructed set of heterosexual relations' which construct women as being 'in "need" [and] men as "having"' (Johnson, 2005: 101).

explain their marital problems and their divorces.

In the West sexual infidelity is cited as one of the most common reasons for divorce (Previti and Amato, 2004), as it is in Korea. Both Korean men and women point to infidelity as a crucial issue in their divorces (Kim Sook Ja, 1998; Lee Jae Kyoung, 2000; Kwack Bae Hee, 2005). Two men in my sample said that they divorced because their wives asked for a divorce after they found out about their affairs and one man divorced because of his wife's affair. Rather than exploring how affairs function as a common reason for divorce, I will consider how masculine understandings of affairs and marital sexual relationships become a central issue in their narratives of divorce. The following segment of Chul-Su's narrative reveals some of the masculine meanings men attach to affairs:

When men commit adultery, they do not give affection. It is just for fun. [It] only feels like wanting to touch someone. Men never give anything of their mind. The mind stays at home. When I talked to my friends who committed adultery [they said] that they never wanted to divorce. Everyone talked like that. [His friend said] 'She [the woman his friend was having the affair with] is not someone I want to live with'. After committing adultery, they go back home. Even though they divorced due to the adultery, because their wives are taking care of their children, men return home because of their children. However, women do not. Women do not come back home. I do not like it. Men and women can make mistakes. Why do women not come back home? Of course, it may be because of the Confucian culture and men should understand the situation. However, when men stay with other women, touching them or drinking with them, their minds are still at home. Women give everything to one man. However, men do not. [Chul-Su]

Chul-Su wants to live with his wife again even though she had an affair. His understanding of why his wife did not return home is based on his belief that women and men attach different meanings to affairs: men see it as fun while women give everything to one man. Chul-Su uses the term 'mistake' to describe his wife's reason for having an affair and he also describes her refusal

to return home as a 'mistake'. Chul-Su's understanding of his wife's decision not to return home draws on Confucian culture, which emphasises patriarchal authority and hierarchical relations between genders. He also uses his belief that women naturally give everything to one man to explain her decision. He interprets his wife's reasons in terms of the masculine meanings he attaches to affairs and this ensures that his wife's real reasons remain invisible. His interpretation of her reasons highlights his understanding of women as weak, dependent and emotionally needy (Duncombe and Marsden, 1996: 222). Men make a separation between the sexual act as fun and their commitment to their wives. Chang-Jin, for example, explains his affair in terms of his need for sex:

Sometimes when I did not come home due to gambling, she thought I was having an affair. Of course, while I was gambling, I had a chance to meet women. So, there were some women I met just 'for fun'. However, it was not a serious relationship. My wife thought I was having an affair because she did not know about my gambling. My mother-in-law also thought that I had an affair because I did not come home and did not provide money. So, she [his mother-in-law] suggested divorce. [...] I did not give my heart to other women but the child's mother did not like having sex. So I just did it. [a long pause]
[Chang-Jin]

Chang-Jin explained his sexual relationships with other women as something he did for fun. He blames his wife's lack of sexual desire for his affair and he notes that his gambling provided opportunities for meeting other women. Chang-Jin does not take responsibility for making the choice to have an affair as he blames his wife's 'lack of sexual desire' and his social environment. He does not reveal any moral guilt and he describes his affair as something that 'was not a serious relationship'. Men can thus consider their affairs to be insignificant. While men understand their affairs in terms of their sexual needs, women explain their affairs in the context of their gendered burdens and various dissatisfactions in marriage (see chapter 6). In Yang Da Jin's analysis of women's and men's past experiences of adultery, she finds that women's

to return home as a 'mistake'. Chul-Su's understanding of his wife's decision not to return home draws on Confucian culture, which emphasises patriarchal authority and hierarchical relations between genders. He also uses his belief that women naturally give everything to one man to explain her decision. He interprets his wife's reasons in terms of the masculine meanings he attaches to affairs and this ensures that his wife's real reasons remain invisible. His interpretation of her reasons highlights his understanding of women as weak, dependent and emotionally needy (Duncombe and Marsden, 1996: 222). Men make a separation between the sexual act as fun and their commitment to their wives. Chang-Jin, for example, explains his affair in terms of his need for sex:

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affairs were related to their self-value, marital dissatisfaction and sexual relationship while men separated adultery from their individual marital dissatisfaction and their self-esteem (Yang Da Jin, 2004).

While women raise various issues to explain their marital problems, men tend to use sexual issues to account for their affairs. Men focus on the frequency of their sexual relations as a mirror of the quality of their relationships. Men thus use the lack of sexual intercourse with their wives to explain their divorces. The emphasis on the lack of sexual contact as the main problem emerges in three of the men's stories:

We often say that men and women's relationship is like 'Chalro Mulbeagi' (The couple are inseparably bound up by love). When the couple has a good sexual relationship there is not a big problem. When we were newly married, she was younger than 30 and had high expectations [of a sexual relationship]. However, I could not do it often because of a lack of time. [Myoung-Gi]

Chul-Su: Women and men are different. A so-called good sexual relationship is a really important thing. That's the reason a couple can laugh together even after fighting. That makes life fun and provides happiness. [...] I believe that we had problems in our sexual life, and that's why she left me.

SN: What made you think like that?

Chul-Su: How could she be with a man who is two years younger than her and does not have a good economic status? That [sexual relationship] is where women find happiness. Anyway, everything is my fault because I did not do it often enough because of my work. [Chul-Su]

Both Myoung-Gi and Chul-Su argue that 'a good sexual relationship' can resolve marital problems. They felt guilty that they did not have sex with their wives often enough but they argued that the marital problems due to their sexual problems were unavoidable. They also believed that they could have

made their wives happy if only they had time for sex. Men regard sex as the direct reason for their marital problems. Conversely, they also see sex as the main strategy through which marital problems can be resolved. This also emerges in Joo-Min's story. He thinks that his wife might have wanted to travel to India for two months because she felt stifled in her life with him since they also worked together. He also makes a direct link between his wife's dissatisfaction and their poor sexual relationship due to his physical condition:

At the time, because I was obsessed with the restaurant, my body was not my body. Before that, it [our sex life] was really amazing. Whenever we had sex, she had orgasms - sometimes five orgasms a day. After a year of marriage, she could no longer experience that because I was too worn out to have sex. [...] At that time I did not have enough physical strength for sex. [Joo-Min]

Joo-Min sees their poor sexual relationship as the direct cause of his wife's dissatisfaction with him. Jackson and Scott note that 'many men are still inclined to see sexual contact as a panacea for problems in a relationship' and they often regard sex 'as an unproblematic signifier of intimacy' (Jackson and Scott, 1997: 567). Joo-Min thinks that his 'ability' to give his wife frequent orgasms indicates that they had a good relationship rather than just good sex. Like many of the other men Joo-Min emphasises that their sexual problems were caused by unavoidable factors because they had to work. They thus saw intimacy as expendable while they pursued their careers for the benefit of their families.

5. Summary

In this chapter, I explored men's explanations of their reasons for getting divorced and how their narratives are not so much about telling us what happened in their marriages. Rather, the focus is on their moral concerns about their divorces and how they constantly negotiate and reinterpret their stories as

morally acceptable to themselves and others in order to make sense of why they divorced. Therefore, these men's narratives revolved around the ways in which they tried to fulfil their gendered responsibilities, regardless of whether they worked or not. Divorce raises important questions about men's and women's gendered responsibilities. The men who had economic problems repeatedly highlight that their lack of consistent income was the result of circumstances that were beyond their control. It was not their choice to shirk their economic responsibility and they emphasised that they were not careless about their families' well-being. Some other men who did not have financial problems argued that their work-centred lives caused their lack of intimate relationships but these men emphasised that their work was for their families. The difficulties that were caused by their work and lack of time for the family were not their fault as individuals. Rather, it resulted from the burden and pressure they had as family providers. They also regarded their poor intimate relationships with their wives as a trivial fault rather than a big fault. The stories men construct to explain their marital problems and their divorces stress the men's masculine life values and their public responsibilities. Men and women tell different and gendered stories about the meanings they attach to their marriages and divorces, which I will explore in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

HER DIVORCE

1. Introduction

In chapter 5, I explored the ways in which men's narratives of divorce are centred around issues of 'work' and 'intimacy', and how these issues are told in relation to men's ideals of 'husband' identities/responsibilities deeply embedded in Korean culture. In this chapter, I shall discuss different ways in which women construct the meaning of 'work' and 'intimacy' in their divorce narratives, negotiating and challenging the 'ideal' gendered responsibilities and practices in marriage.

Women's and men's stories of divorce reflect 'the gendering of moral tales', which Ribbens McCarthy and colleagues find in step-families (2003). They emphasise how the meanings of responsibility are constructed differently to make a stable family unit, revealing different gendered moral tales: Men's moral accounts are primarily based on their responsibility as family providers, while women's narratives are embedded within women's deeply gendered accounts of emotional work and skills to make a stable family home (Ribbens McCarthy, et al., 2003: 60). Similarly in my data, women's and men's divergent interpretations of the 'causes' of breakdown relate to gendered, embedded family practices which are interconnected with "doing" everyday material, verbal and emotional activities' in marriage (Ribbens McCarthy, et al., 2003: 8).

Women's main grounds for divorce in my sample are listed in table 9 below.

Table 9. Women's Perceived Reasons for Marriage Breakdown

Name	Reasons for divorce
Yun-Ja	Financial problems; husband's affair
Sue-Mi	Financial problems; husband's alcohol abuse, violence
Mi-Ran	Financial problems; husband's personality
Young-Hee	Financial problems; husband's violence
Ju-Ni	Financial problems; husband's violence
Ji-Sue	Financial problems; husband's violence
Na-Ri	Financial problems
Ga-Rim	Financial problems; her affair
*Jo-An	Her affair; incompatibility
Jeong-Mi	Incompatibility; her affair/violence
Su-Ji	Incompatibility; husband's personality
Han-Na	Incompatibility; husband's personality
Min-Hae	Incompatibility; spouse's personality
So-Ra	Husband's irrational jealousy/affair; husband's substance
Kyoung-Na	abuse/violence
Mi-Ya	Incompatibility; husband's violence
Soo-Yun	Husband's affair; Incompatibility; husband's personality

+All women initiated the divorce.

*Among three women who had committed adultery, only Jo-An cited this as a major reason for her divorce.

Just as men's narratives divide into two main groups, 'work' and 'intimacy', women's narratives also follow two main themes. Women's biggest single problem emerged from the need to provide emotional and material support when their husbands lacked work or were unemployed. These women's accounts differed from the view that women become empowered through their work. Women's ability to earn a wage while men are unable to provide support symbolises men's loss of power. Women feel that they are under pressure not to be seen as taking over men's power by being the wage earner, and so causing marital trouble. The other main theme to emerge is that even when men are 'good' family providers who have work, they do not consult or negotiate about family matters. These women's accounts reveal their troubles with men who are patriarchal family providers and who expect women to have submissive roles in marriage. These women emphasise daily tensions between a 'new gender ideology and old reality' (Hochschild, 2003: 135). Therefore,

women's troubles are not caused by a single factor, but rather are symptomatic of their dissatisfaction with an unequal family structure which leads to a loss of their sense of self.

Although the women interviewed can be divided into two groups, as illustrated above, the gendered burden and loss of self in marriage is common across all women's accounts. Women's interpretations of the reasons for their divorces are already gendered moral stories that reflect how they see their marital responsibilities. In this chapter, women's narratives of 'work' and 'intimacy' will be first analysed with reference to the group of women whose husbands had economic difficulties and subsequently women who were living with a patriarchal family provider.

Women's narratives around men's economic difficulties are exemplified in Na-Ri's story. Na-Ri had been married Hong-Sye, whose interview was analysed in the previous chapter. Thus, their different interpretations of the same relationship allow us to understand how men and women situate themselves differently in relation to marital breakdown.

2. Work and Money

2.1 Na-Ri's Story

Na-Ri and Hong-Sye give different accounts of their marital problems and of 'events' that led to their divorce. For Hong-Sye, the reason for the divorce stems from his failure in the university entry exam, and Na-Ri's consequential loss of trust in his 'ability' to become a proper 'husband' – a family provider (see chapter 5). In recounting those times, Na-Ri places greater emphasis on her long sacrifice for marriage, and Hong-Sye's lack of effort to improve the situation. Na-Ri indicates the sacrifices she made because her ex-husband spent almost 8 years to prepare for many exams, but then failed them all. Na-Ri's faith in Hong-Sye's efforts is shown by her continuous financial support

for his studies, despite the family's difficult economic situation.

I supported him and didn't make a single complaint. Whenever he asked me for money to learn something, I always gave him the money he needed without saying anything. I always saved 'his money' first, when I got my salary. But it was a huge mistake to give him money like that [sigh]. He said he was studying hard, but it wasn't true at all. [...] He didn't care about his situation and had no idea what he wanted to do. He ended up as a layabout. [Na-Ri]

'Mistake' is a crucial term for understanding how Na-Ri and Hong-Sye constructed and made sense of their marital responsibilities in the context of different gendered expectations. Whilst Hong-Sye, as I discussed in chapter 5, used 'mistake' to refer to his decision to study, Na-Ri associated the term 'mistake' with her belief in him as she emphasised that she gave him money without question and that she 'saved his money first', even though she did not earn enough to support him as well as their child²⁶. Her long endurance and frustration without being rewarded for her support is articulated by the term 'layabout' to describe his behaviour concerning his studies and his lack of a goal in life. Yet her final decision to divorce is not directly linked to the fact that he failed all his exams. Rather, Na-Ri still thought that divorce was too 'hasty' until she realised that he was completely irresponsible in everything he did. Na-Ri describes why she finally decided to divorce him.

In 2004 he delivered newspapers for about a year. During that time, I lost all trust in him. He had to go to deliver newspapers early in the morning. But he slept. Just slept. He didn't think that he had to go. He didn't. [...] He didn't make any effort. I couldn't sleep either, because I needed to wake him up. But if I woke him up, he kept saying 'later, later', and didn't wake up. [...] So, I was completely disappointed in him. Even when delivering newspapers, he couldn't manage without my help. I wasn't even asking him to study at the time [Sigh]. He never

26. Na-Ri mentioned that she had a lot of debt when they divorced.

took responsibility to see anything through to the end. [Na-Ri]

Na-Ri constantly emphasises that her divorce was caused by his lack of effort and intolerable behaviour, and that there was no other choice than divorce. During the interview, Na-Ri told me how painful it was for her to see his lack of goals in life, and how much effort she had made to persuade him to live up to his responsibilities. Na-Ri's expression that 'He never took responsibility to see anything through to the end' shows his long dependence on her for support and her eventual loss of trust in him.

Na-Ri's explanation of her divorce in the context of a long period of endurance and her gendered burden is reflected in the stories of other women who married men who failed to have a consistent source of income. Women's understanding of economic support is constructed around their husbands' lack of responsibility and constant demands on women's emotional and caring work, as well as their reliance on women's income.

2.2 He is Like a Child

Eight female interviewees (Na-Ri, Yun-Ja, Sue-Mi, Mi-Ran, Ju-Ni, Ga-Rim, Ji-Sue and Young-Hee) emphasised that their husbands' irregular employment status and lack of financial responsibility were major problems. They also talked about suffering caused by men's unwillingness to change and their husband's unreasonable behaviour. The majority of these women used the term 'child' to describe their husbands' behaviour, not to refer to their lack of employment itself, but rather their irresponsibility and unreliability as well as their unrealistic views of their lives and their abilities.

Langford (1999) found that many of the women in her study complained about their husbands demanding that women do all the caring work. They thus describe how their husbands are childish in the sense that women become

'everybody's Mummy.' However, she also found that women call their husbands 'children' as a way of asserting their own sense of power and control in their relationships and notes that this points to the 'paradoxical nature of the feelings of power' (Langford, 1999: 75). Langford argues that a woman can feel 'emotional power' and that a woman can exercise power by being a 'judge of [her] partner's behaviour'. Furthermore, women can feel powerful by refusing men's requests for 'services' (Langford, 1999: 76-78). In my sample, when women describe their husbands as 'children', however, they do not stress the feelings of power they gain through their constant caring work. Rather, their use of the term 'child' is an important way in which women provide evidence of their daily gendered burden and unequal relationships as well as their 'emotional work', in addition to their wage earning labour

Yun-Ja, for example, articulates her various efforts to make her husband more responsible and compares the process to 'educating a problem child'. Yun-Ja said that her husband was unemployed for most of their marriage and changed his jobs very frequently. When he was out of work, he constantly spent money on education but he only attended these educational programmes for short periods of time before dropping out:

While I was living with him, he even went to Australia twice to learn English. It would have been the same whether he learned here or abroad. But I heard that people [Australians] are thrifty, nice and good mannered. I thought that he could, at least, learn those things there. He said that he would learn something, but then came back one month later. He just drank there. I did everything for him. It was like educating a problem child. I thought if he found even one thing he really liked, he could succeed. However, it didn't work. [Yun-Ja]

Yun-Ja uses the phrase 'educating a problem child' to describe how hard she tried to help her husband and how she felt when her efforts yielded no results. She sees him as a child because of his lack of awareness of the reality of his situation. She also felt hurt because, even though she knew that he was not

mature enough to act responsibly, she continued to hope that he would change. The way in which Yun-Ja sees her husband's lack of awareness of the reality of his situation as child-like is similar in Mi-Ran's story.

Two years after our marriage, he took temporary leave from his job. He didn't like his company very much. He said that his work wasn't at his level. As far as I know, when people graduate from university, they start to work in very simple jobs such as typing. When people start working they often do something that is different from what they studied at university. My ex-husband thought that he should be working in a professional job from the beginning. He thinks that the job he had was beneath him. [...] I didn't like his attitude. He often did not go to work, saying that he was ill. [...] I thought that I should think of him as a child. I thought, 'because he is immature, he might find it difficult to work'. [...] He was always fretful about his jobs. [...] At the time, I didn't work²⁷ because I wanted to get pregnant and people told me that it was difficult to get pregnant when one is tired. At the time, he was temporarily on leave from his job. There was no income. [...] During that time, he went to America to see his friend, even though I did not work. [...] My father-in-law rang me and told me that 'People need to go outside to have fresh air'. When we finished the phone call, I thought, 'How could he just think of his son?' [Very angry voice] [Mi-Ran]

Mi-Ran told me during the interview that she allowed her ex-husband to take time off work because she thought that she had to agree to his demands in order to keep her marriage intact. However, Mi-Ran's choice of terminology, such as 'child' and 'fretful' symbolises how she was burdened by his lack of economic responsibility as well as by his selfishness in thinking mainly about

27. Mi-Ran married into the ideal middle class family and she gave up her job before marriage. After marriage, the reason why she wanted to work was related to her 'resistance' to her mother-in-law's constant control over her. Mi-Ran said that her mother-in-law rang twice every day to ask what she cooked for her husband even when they did not live together with her parents-in-law. In my sample, more than half the women claimed that their mother-in-laws pressurized them to fulfil their roles at home even when the women worked. Mi-Ran had taken a break from working in order to start a family.

himself, reinforced by the way in which his family only considered his point of view.

Many women also described their husbands' 'childishness' by pointing to the way in which they spent money, regardless of the fact that they could not support their families financially. The majority of the women whose husbands had financial problems expressed how angry and hurt they were that their husbands were too childish or selfish to consider how economic hardship affected their wives.

For two years, I supported him and did not receive any money from him. He got an unemployment allowance which was more than my salary. Also, he got a pension. I found this out later but I didn't see any money. For two years, he spent more money [than me]. I was concerned about education fees for my child and all sorts of living costs [...]. He spent all his money on alcohol because of his pride [her emphasis]. He bought alcohol for people he played football with. [...] Later, my parents told me that 'he is not your husband but more like a child.' [Young-Hee]

I found him a very good private teaching job where he could earn quite a lot of money. [...] He did not give me any money to contribute towards our living costs and one day, when I came back home, he had bought a computer which cost so much at the time. He needed a few months' salary to buy it. I was so angry! Because I didn't have money, I sometimes had to walk to the factory [her work place] and I sometimes borrowed money from friends. Didn't he understand the situation? How childish is he! [Very angry voice] [Ga-Rim]

By comparing their husbands to children, the women highlight their husbands' lack of responsibility. The women were very hurt because their husbands were not mature enough to commit financially to their marriages. In some cases, other people recognised that the problem was with the men, as when Young-Hee's parents told her that her husband was like a child. Women's accounts of their husbands' childish or selfish attitudes reveal a split between their real

husbands and the men they desire them to be. When they use the term 'child', they do not attach the 'real' meaning of the word to it. Rather, they use it to convey their emotions and the anger they felt because of their marital problems. The way that women liken their husbands to children is also related to the nature of women's domestic responsibilities and the moral and cultural norms about women's responsibilities.

2.3 Daily Emotional/Caring Work

Finch and Mason contend that,

'through [the married couple's daily] negotiations, people create sets of material and moral baggage but material baggage is perhaps most easily recognized...Moral baggage, on the other hand, is less tangible, but involves the moral identities and reputations ... also constructed through this process' (Finch and Mason, 1993: 92-3).

In the process of fulfilling responsibilities and commitments, it involves a lot of emotional and moral work to be seen 'in a good light' (Finch and Mason, 1993: 175). In order to understand women's daily burden, one needs to address their emotional and moral responsibilities as well as their economic support of men. In my study, women's daily struggles are related to their husbands' lack of appreciation and their demands on women's daily labour such as housework or child-care, even when the women were the only ones working outside the home. Mi-Ran's story is typical in this regard:

My ex-husband kept complaining that I was not taking good care of him. Whenever we had an argument, he told me 'Do you disrespect me? Because you earn more money than me, are you ignoring me?' I said, 'Why do you think like that? It is our money not my money'. Whatever I said this to him, he would not think like that. [...] When I taught students [at a private institution], there were special lessons [during student holidays] which started from 7 am and finished after 11 pm. [He

was] sitting on the sofa while I was telling him 'I am so tired.' He always told me 'How could you feel tired without doing your 'duty' well?' Even when he stayed home without working, he said things like that. I thought to myself, 'since I earn our living costs, how could he say that?' He did not appreciate my work. He was just staying home, watching TV all day and resting. The house was terribly messy. He was just a child without any conscience or sense of responsibility. [Mi-Ran]

When women call their husbands children they emphasise that their daily burden involves more than men's lack of consistent work. Mi-Ran's use of the word 'child' highlights her caring work for him as well as his lack of appreciation for her work. She also reveals the emotional work she does to spare his feelings and his pride by downplaying her public success in her work outside the home. Women's use of the term 'child' is an important way in which women provide 'evidence concerning the shape and condition of a family' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994: 241) in order to emphasise their daily gendered burden, the inequality of their relationship, and their emotional work.

Without any reason, he was argumentative and critical about everything. [He told me] 'The soup is salty. How could you cook like this?' He vented his anger at me. When he blamed me for not doing the housework, I couldn't argue with him because I was so submissive at that time. If he said something like that, I thought that maybe I hadn't done my duty well rather than asking him why he didn't do the housework. I was just so stupid. [Ju-Ni]

When he was staying home, if I didn't prepare *bab* [food], I would feel that he was so pitiful. What's more, I could find myself thinking 'Do I disrespect him because he is not earning?' [Mi-Ran]

Ju-Ni and Mi-Ran's guilt caused them to see housework as their own responsibility, regardless of whether their husband worked or not. Therefore, the term, 'child' indicates women's anger towards their husbands but also reveals women's powerless status within marriage and that they position

themselves in a caring role towards their husbands. Women's narratives about why they want to do housework well also reveal that they actively attempted to do 'perfect' housework as part of the process of making a space for themselves at home in which they value themselves. Skeggs argues that caring identity is not about 'the fulfilment of the needs of others and selflessness but also on the fulfilment of their own desire to feel valuable' (Skeggs, 1997: 62). This is evident in my sample as women's understandings of housework are a crucial part of their strategies to achieve self-respect and try to avoid reproaches from their husbands.

The reason I tried to do the housework well was that I wanted to have some self-esteem. When I think [about my marriage], I want to think that I did my best. [Mi-Ran]

I thought if I want to keep my work outside, I had to do the housework perfectly. [Ju-Ni]

I wanted to keep my own world but I didn't want to get blamed. [People might think] 'If you aren't doing housework or don't take care of a child well, how could you go about outside the home?' To keep my own work, it [perfect housework] was *my shield* [her emphasis]. [Young-Hee]

He [her husband] thought that working outside the home was an opportunity for me to have an 'affair'. [...] A wife and mother's duty isn't like that [to work outside]. [...] So, I really tried 200% (to manage house work) in order to keep my work [sigh]. [Ji-Sue]²⁸

Even though women's attention to housework reflects the way in which they pursue their gendered responsibility, it causes them constant pain and it makes them feel that their husbands do not appreciate their sacrifices. It thus

28. Ji-Sue started to work when her son grew up because she did not feel happy as a housewife. After she worked, her husband gave up working again. He had a year work off at the beginning of their marriage.

contributes to women's feeling of being sickened by their husbands. Women's constant emphasis on the fact that they do all the housework reflects the social constraints and limitations they face in society. Pyke finds that men see their wives' employment as 'a further indication of their failure' and they tend to attack their wives through 'control over their wives' earnings' and by 'demanding a cleaner house' (1994: 79). This is evident in my data as Mi-Ran's husband told her: 'How could you feel tired without doing your 'duty' well?' Other women also had similar experiences. Men's complaints about women's housework reflect their subjective struggles about not working and their worries about what people think about their status. Furthermore, the way in which men can reinforce women's roles at home is related to the social control mechanism which can also be exerted by the neighbourhood and women's parents-in-law as 'blame' is an important social and individual control mechanism that affects these women's identities in marriage.

I had difficulty with the division of housework. *I thought we could share it because I worked outside the home* [my emphasis]. [...] He told me that whenever he had time to do it, he would. However, when the house became messy, I had to do it because his parents lived so near us. He did not feel any pressure because of this, but I had to be concerned about them [his parents]. [Sue-Mi]

I always went to sleep at around 3 am. It became a habit for ten years. I've never gone to bed early. Even though he came back at 2 or 3, he had to have *bab* [food]. Then he would throw up and shout at me. When he came home after drinking, *if I frowned, he shouted loudly to the neighbourhood* [her emphasis], saying 'How could you treat your husband like that?' I felt so ashamed. Therefore, I tried not to make any trouble. [...] I was sick in my heart because of him. [Yun-Ja]

Both Sue-Mi's and Yun-Ja's narratives highlight the gendered pressure through the community or men's parents that was expressed by many women. Their use of the expressions 'shame' or 'pressure' is a crucial aspect of the moral factors which delimit 'negotiation' between women and men. Even though

Sue-Mi asserted her sense of equality and wanted to share the housework with him, pressure from his parents-in-law eventually forced her to accept her role at home. Therefore, in reality, although women have a clear understanding of and desire for equality, this is not enough for this equality to be achieved. Ribbens McCarthy and colleagues argue that 'doing the right thing was not so much related to a sense of an individual making moral choices, because neither of them were given much option. The right thing was jointly decided by members of their community' (2003: 58).

As long as housework or cooking is considered to be women's responsibility and essential to maintaining their intimate relationships or marriages, giving up housework will be symbolic of 'resistance' and will constitute a sign that they want to leave:

Not to prepare the food, it was such an enormous message which signified that our relationship had ended. [...] However, he kept talking about it to people. [...] In my mind, I was also constantly thinking that I did not prepare *bab* [food]. Did I abandon my responsibility? Is he such a bad person that I didn't even want to cook for him? [Young-Hee]

Even when women have decided to divorce, the pressure to provide emotional care and do the housework continues to make them question themselves about their responsibilities. Young-Hee had already decided to divorce and refused to do any housework, especially the cooking. However, her husband's complaints about her decision also became a way to exert social control over her.

In my sample, when women work and men do not work, women do not insist that their husbands share the housework. The interview data are too limited to draw any unequivocal conclusions. Nonetheless, it could be argued that this reflects the social norms that consider men's unemployment as a form of disempowerment which assumes women's empowerment in the relationship. Therefore, this cultural norm becomes the basis of women's constant

regulation of their own behaviour (Park Hae Kyoung and Guk Mi Ae, 2003). On the other hand, when women and men both work, sharing the housework is considered to be part of women's and men's equality even though, in reality, it is not realized in most families. There are similar findings in Hochschild and Machung's study which shows that husbands who are underemployed, less ambitious, or earned less than their wives, did less family work. Women participated in this 'balancing' to soothe their husbands' threatened 'male egos' by not pressing them to do more housework (Hochschild and Machung, 2003). The pressure which women are under to accommodate the 'male ego' is also evident in women's repeated insistence that they did not talk about money to their husbands, revealing women's concern about men's sense of loss of power at home.

2.4 I did not talk about money

Hochschild and Machung (2003) state that talk about money is part of 'being a man' and that it symbolises men's identity and reflects cultural and moral factors that women have to consider. Therefore, women's reference to men's lack of income can be seen as disregarding men's identity as men. Stamp asserts that women's work outside the home does not grant them the same power that men obtain by controlling the money in the family. In my sample, there are similar findings that reflect Stamp's contention that women themselves are not concerned with obtaining power over men through their work, even when the woman is the principal earner (Stamp, 1985, see also VanEvery, 1995). This is why, as evidently shown in my data, the majority of women whose husbands had economic problems found it important that they should not be seen to undermine their husbands. Women's emphasis on their hesitation to talk about money links with their concern about their husbands' status and feelings.

Even though he doesn't work to earn money, I thought that he was

working because he was a painter [he only worked for a few months to earn money during the marriage]. He might be looking for a meaningful thing. [...] It is ideal for both of us to work and I was not so happy that he wasn't working. However, I could not talk about it. Therefore, I was in self-denial. I never told him that he had to work. I did not want to hurt him with my words. [Sue-Mi]

I thought that he could spend two years trying to figure out what he wanted from his life. I didn't even ask: why aren't you looking for a job? [Young-Hee]

Women's reasons for not talking about money are revealed in their language (such as the use of the term 'hurt') which is related to concern about contributing to men's sense of failure (Pyke, 1994: 79). This is a major part of women's gendered emotional work when men do not have a regular job. However, women's reasons for emphasising that they did not talk about money can also be traced back to their belief that their husbands could change if women could maintain both work and the family.

I thought I could change him. If he had a proper family and a warm family, he would change. However, after marriage, he changed his jobs many times and worked just four months and was unemployed for eight months of a year. In one year, he spent between five million won (£2,500) and ten million won (£5,000) of my money rather than saving. He used up all the money that I earned. [...] I never asked him 'why aren't you earning money?' I didn't want his confidence to weaken. [...] *If he just has enough time and luck, it will be all right* [her emphasis]. When a person lives without working for a long time, a person becomes very sensitive. If I treat him like that, he might get no chance to work. In order to encourage him, I gave him more money, saying that it would be all right. [Yun-Ja]

Rather than teach this man to change, I thought he might change through being impressed by my constant sacrifice and hard work. [Ju-Ni]

Women's emphasis that 'they did not nag about money' is important in interpreting their marriage and their deep commitment to their husbands who have not found their proper position and goal in life. This is women's way of constructing their painful lives and their sacrifices, emphasising that they trusted in their husbands so much. However, women regulate themselves in that they did not talk about money or about men's lack of effort to find their goals in life. This shows that women take care not to appear as though they are downplaying men's status and also fear aggravating their husbands.

It became my habit to be quiet. If I talked about something like changing jobs to him, I could not talk for more than three minutes. [If I talked more] he became crazy and attacked me, asking 'Why do you talk about the same thing again and again?' He went mad. Then, things became difficult in a different way. It became impossible to talk. So, when I needed to talk, I had to call him in a bar to talk and then had to talk very softly. Other than then, there was no communication. I felt that there was only darkness around me. [Yun-Ja]

He normally told me sarcastically, 'All the world knows that you are great. You do well'. I really hated to hear it. He always said things like that to avoid his responsibility for the situation. If I asked him why he didn't try this job or something, things became very uncomfortable. He thought that I bragged about what I did but I am not that kind of person. I constantly wondered what was wrong with me and whether there was any problem with me because he told me that there was. [Ju-Ni]

Women experience practical and emotional difficulty getting men to communicate. This reflects how the social regulation of emotion in the context of the 'gender division of emotion work' determines women's responsibility in marriage (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993: 221). Hochschild notes that the 'expressive dimension of any context has to do with the relation between a person's feelings and other people's understanding of and response to those feelings, that is, with the issue of communication' (Hochschild, 2003: 81). Women's social responsibility to ensure emotional well-being at home

accounts for their endurance and their resistance to talk about it. They are constrained by the fact that men consider women's expressions of dissatisfaction as 'trivial' or as women's attempt at 'controlling them'. However, women also themselves reveal their struggles against being seen as a strong woman who is demanding of men. Ju-Ni's dislike of hearing 'you are great', to which she responded 'I am not that kind of person' reveals that the social norm of submissive woman silences Ju-Ni and makes her vulnerable in relation to her husband.

These women's accounts reveal their daily emotional negotiations about what they can do or how they can change their husbands. Women's emotional work to bolster the male ego and also not be seen as a strong woman reflects women's disempowered position in marriage and how this is not a private matter but is related to socially constructed gendered responsibilities for maintaining social and familial status (Bartky, 1990). Bartky (1990) draws on Hochschild's analysis of the 'commercialisation of human feeling' which explains how aeroplane attendants' concern for passengers' feelings involve their caring about passengers' feelings as well as managing their own to 'induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 1983: 7 cited in Bartky, 1990: 104). Bartky (1990) emphasises that women's emotional caring at home resembles this process in that women become disempowered and this leads to self-estrangement: an inability to identify one's own emotional states.

Women's emotional work, to protect their husband's ego and to hide their individual struggles, is also linked with the social pressure to keep the family intact. This explains why women do not talk to others about their husbands' problems, and why it takes them so long to consider divorce. In many cases, women persist for many years with unhappy marriages before they finally make the decision to get divorced.

2.5 Difficulties of Keeping Family Together

Chambers states that ““doing” rather than just “having” family implies knowledge of wider social conceptions of what constitutes the attitudes and activities/practices regarded as appropriate ingredients for “happy families”” (2001: 169). However, this daily process of making ‘happy or proper families’ also involves women’s constant emotional work, explaining why women keep their husbands’ situation ‘secret’ from other people. To keep secret about their husbands’ situations reflects ‘self-monitoring and self-censorship’ in the context of gendered ‘familial identities’ (Chambers, 2001: 169) as we see through women's accounts.

I didn’t talk about my husband. People saw only brief parts of our situation. *To talk about it is like spitting in my face* [my emphasis].
[Yun-Ja]

At that time, I lost my pride because I had to live with this kind of person. I could not talk to other people. I didn’t tell my parents at all. If my close friends married similar men, I might tell them to divorce. I didn’t do it myself. [Sue-Mi]

I told a few close friends honestly, but in front of most people I said he kept studying. [Na-Ri]

Women’s accounts of how they did not openly discuss their husbands’ situations with others shows that they saw themselves as part of a family unit rather than two independent individuals. The fact that their reputation is attached to that of their husbands is shown in their use of the phrases ‘like spitting in my face’ or ‘loss of pride.’ Smart argues that the ‘dark side of everyday family relationships’ is crucial to understanding ordinary people’s lives as part of family reality (2007: 154). Therefore, as Smart (2007) argues, the commonly accepted view that one should leave a bad marital relationship is

unrealistic. What's more, social judgements about 'bad' or 'good' family life mask women's invisible doing of family practices, in order to keep their family intact. This highlights that 'the bonds [of family life] are seldom easily broken, not only because of issues of power and lack of resources, but also because family relationships form a poignant part of ourselves' (Smart, 2007: 154).|

Women's sacrifices for their husbands through their emotional work and financial support, and the expectation that their husbands would change, reflect their sense of moral responsibility and commitment to keeping their family intact. Therefore, women's accounts of what led to their decision to divorce emphasise that their husbands did not change at all, and that their husbands had serious and unacceptable attitudes towards women. Many women explained their decision to divorce by referring to the fact that men made no effort to engage in anything and this symbolised their husbands' personal problems beyond their lack of economic responsibility, leading them to consider divorce. In this way, women's legitimating narratives about their decision to divorce are morally acceptable and their partners become the people who are responsible for dissolving the marriage. These social norms can help to explain why women endure and sacrifice for their marriage until they finally decide that the men's unacceptable attitudes can be considered as a justification for breaking the commitment of marriage.

Women's comments that they received no rewards for their long support reflect their sense of loss and anger at the fact that their husbands did not understand how much they had sacrificed. They felt that there was no other option and men's lack of appreciation contributed to their eventual resolve to divorce.

In the beginning, he said to me 'Sorry, sorry' and then 'Thank you, thank you'. Later on, he made insinuations about me, asking 'Are you that great? [...] OK. You are great because your company likes your ability. You live like that. I will live like this'. He acted like this because of his situation. [Yun-Ja]

I expected that at least he would thank me. I made enormous efforts to do everything for him. One day, I made a joke to him, saying 'Do you appreciate me?' I was so surprised by his reaction because he made it clear that it meant nothing to him. [Young-Hee]

Even though I supported the family without mentioning the economic situation, he said 'What have I spent? I did part time work. Because you are so [she says this emphatically] strong, you kept insisting on your opinions, I became worse and worse. Later on I even felt afraid of you'. Everything was my fault. [Na-Ri]

Even though there were so many problems in marriage, I thought if I tried my best, he and his parents would appreciate my efforts. However, they never did understand. [Mi-Ran]

Many women describe their divorce as 'a last-resort', a response to their husband's lack of appreciation and constant demands (Walzer and Oles, 2003:347). In some cases, women's decision to divorce was not until their husbands became violent (see below section 4) and also the husband's constant affair in the case of Yun-Ja.

The social view that women become empowered in marriage through their work, when their husbands lacked work or were unemployed, does not reflect women's long endurance and sacrifice to support men both emotionally and financially. Women's term 'child' for their husbands encapsulates their intimate relationships with their husbands and symbolizes their lack of power and loss of self as the marriage centres around men and women are expected to make sacrifices. Women's social selves as primary family carers are the most crucial aspect in women's interpretation and their burden in relation to their marital lives. This links with social and cultural pressure on women to ensure 'the well-being and emotional climate in the home', regardless of their professional and economic contributions (Julia Tao Lai Po-Wah 2005: 275).

Therefore, women's primary responsibility of keeping the whole family harmonious and their lack of power is common to all my respondents' accounts. However, women who did not reveal problems relating to men's work emphasised their troubles in relation to their struggles to pursue (traditional) gendered roles and the lack of consultation with men who are patriarchal family providers and who demand submissive wives in marriage. These struggles are the basis of how women understand the reasons for the failure of their intimate relationships and their loss of self-esteem in the context of unequal gendered responsibility.

3. Intimacy

3.1 He only needs me as a wife

In the cases of nine women whose husbands were an adequate provider (Min-Hae, Kyoung-Na, Mi-Ya, Soo-Yun, Jo-An, Jeong-Mi, Su-Ji, Han-Na and So-Ra), the main reason for women wanting to divorce is constructed around the narrative that their husbands needed them as wives or as ideal women, without having any special feelings for them. Women's isolation and intimate troubles in marriage are constructed within this discursive context.

I don't know since when, but when I think of our relationship, he didn't live with me because he really wanted me, but rather because he needed a perfect accessory next to him. It didn't have to be me specifically, if anyone else could fulfil that role it would be fine with him. For him, I'm not an important person but his ideal woman is important to him. He does not need to live with *Min-Hea* [her emphasis], but it is all right if he lives with his ideal wife. Just an imaginary woman. I thought that I was nothing to him. [...] He always told me 'When you sit, you have to sit like this and put your hands like that'. He usually asked certain things of me. If I said it's hard to do it, he told me 'If you do these things, you can be a perfect woman. Why don't you do it like that? It's a shame'. [Min-Hea]

Min-Hae told me that she prepared different food for each meal, three times a day. She even had to consider the food colour because her husband insisted on a harmonious colour combination of the food on the table. Min-Hae told me that, for ten years, she based her life on her husband's schedule and she described living with him as standing on the 'sharp edge of a knife'. The way that women express their opinions about their relationship with the husband not being based on 'love' but based on 'his needs' are also similarly found in Jeong-Mi's and Soo-Yun's stories.

When I put my leg on his body during sleeping, he hits my leg, even at the beginning of our marriage. I thought all men and women sleep like that [a big laugh]. Even though it might be a little bit heavy, people put up with it for men and women's *gyogam* [physical and emotional warmth]. I think that we should stand it. I think that he absolutely did not love me. He might just need me. To keep his home, he might need a woman and a wife. However, I didn't feel any warmth from him at all. [Jeong-Mi]

Even as soon as we got married, when I wanted to talk, or when we had arranged to go out, without asking me, he would make other arrangements with his friends. Always. [He says] 'What can we do together?' His main life was never with me. He just carried on like he did when he was single. *I was kind of an auxiliary person* [her emphasis]. Honestly, I was not the centre of his life even though we were married. I really couldn't understand it at all. I was just an acceptable match because he was old. So, what can I say? It was really a perfunctory marriage. He just wanted to marry someone that he felt satisfied with. [Soo-Yun]

The women's accounts above show that their marital problems were not caused by a specific moment, but rather that their marriages were never the ideal and that they had long term problems. They use phrases such as: 'I don't know since when', 'even in the beginning of our marriage' and 'even as soon as we got married'. These accounts become the basis of how they endured their unhappiness for a long time. They conceptualise their own complaints and their own feelings in relation to a de-personalised 'wife' referring to 'an imaginary

woman', 'a perfect accessory' and 'an auxiliary person'. Women's explanations of their husbands' needs in the relationship are also expressed by Jo-An; 'Even when we divorced, his main fear was who would cook for him.' Jo-An also said that her role was that of an 'assistant'. These terms - 'someone' or 'an assistant' emphasise how they were in fact non-existent, and stress that 'any woman could do it'. This sense of a lack of self is a crucial way of reconstructing their present life and bringing back their own voice from the past.

Women's narratives highlight gendered expectations of what their roles in marriage should be and they also reveal how they struggled to negotiate these expectations with their husbands. They noted that their husbands treated them like 'a perfect accessory' or an 'auxiliary person' and this resulted in feelings of 'loneliness'.

When I got married, I thought once I got married I would not feel lonely. But I felt so lonely. Actually, it was more difficult to deal with this feeling because I was married. When I was single, it was normal to be lonely. [Min-Hae]

I couldn't have any connection with him. It was like talking to the wall. I felt like that. [Soo-Yun]

Eventually, I realised that we had become very distant and didn't have anything in common. There was no sharing between us. So, it was not good to keep the relationship going. [Su-Ji]

I always felt that I would need a miracle to be able to like him. [Jo-An]

Women's loneliness and dissatisfaction relate to the tension between conventional marriage and their different wishes in marriage (Hackstaff, 1999). Women attribute their marital problems to old family myths which men want

to maintain.

He thinks that if he didn't like something about me, he could change me how he wanted. *The old parents' generation could do this to women, just forcing and controlling women* [my emphasis]. He thinks that women should be submissive and do what he told them to. That isn't real marriage. Even though I wanted to have deep intimate talks, he just avoided talking with me. It became impossible to do it. [Soo-Yun]

The main thing I could not stand about him was that he was really old-fashioned and an old fogey. During the whole of my marriage, not even once did he remove a dish from the table. [Jeong-Mi]

If I said to him 'I cannot live like this', he told me, 'If you cannot live like this, you can leave.' He was like my father-in-law who asked everything of my mother-in-law. [...] No matter how he lived, he had a fantasy that I would keep a good and harmonious family. Rather than trying to change his behaviour, he wanted to do whatever he wanted and everything about managing the family was only my responsibility. [Kyoung-Na]

Women's stories about the reasons why their marriages ended contain expressions such as 'that was not real marriage' or 'old-fashioned and an old fogey' which indicate how they understand their marriage, and emphasise the changing meanings of marriage. In the context of these changing meanings, they condemn men's attitudes, such as lack of communication, unwillingness to help in the household and patriarchal behaviour, as 'old fashioned'. This suggests that it is men's 'cultural lag' which caused their marital problems (Hochschild, 2003). However, Hochschild argues that the 'cultural lag' is really a 'gender lag' at home (Hochschild, 2003: 106) and that this creates tension between women and men. Women's expectations of marriage and their experience of a 'gender lag' at home are expressed by Jeong-Mi, whose story is typical of those of other women in this respect:

Why did I get married? I did not know anything. Without thinking anything [very determined voice], I got married. If I had known marriage would be like this, I might not have done it. [Jeong-Mi]

As Jeong-Mi highlighted, her husband's patriarchal behaviour ('not even once did he remove a dish from the table') becomes central to how she constructs her motives for the divorce in the context of the different ideals of marriage and family. The different ideals of family and the fact that 'their husbands needed them as wives', which are key themes in women's explanations of marital breakdown, result in their daily emotional work to maintain their relationships with their husbands. Examples of this include their constant sensitivity to their husbands' feelings, despite the lack of communication, and the absence of consultation between men and women.

3.2 Lack of Consultation/ Submission

Women whose husbands had economic struggles expressed that the major emotional work was in relation to women's concern about men's sense of failure or their sensitivity about money in order to save male ego. Women whose husbands are patriarchal family providers did emotional work through suppressing and hiding their own feelings and anticipating men's feelings. Women's perception that their husbands did not love them is not related to their husbands' lack of emotional expression itself. Rather, they describe it in terms of men's lack of consultation in marriage. For women, discussion and negotiation is part of their ideal of marital life. Many women talked about men's unwillingness to negotiate as a main contributory factor to their marital struggles. Women's experience of men's unwillingness to negotiate stresses that the husband is seen to have the power to decide without communicating in the family. This reveals whose decisions and position have apparent autonomy and 'rightness' in the family (Sattel, 1983: 120).

SN: *What are the good memories of your marriage?*

Su-Ji: Hum. There were some. Sometimes we enjoyed watching television or having fun with friends when they visited. Even though we had a nice time sometimes, when we had certain household issues, cooking and parents-in-law, he ignored my suggestions.

SN: *When you had a problem, how did you deal with it with your husband?*

Su-Ji: He didn't listen; he just kept distant and stayed alone. There was no possibility to talk and I became silent about what I wanted to say.
[Su-Ji]

He couldn't do anything at home during the week because he finished his work very late. So, only at weekends, I asked him to stay home with the children and the family. That is something I always talked to him about. However, he usually went out to spend time with his friends²⁹. So, that was always a problem between us. If I interrupted what he wanted to do, it turned into a fight. One day, while we were talking, sitting down at the table, he just threw the children's plastic car towards me. I got hit. [...] Because he threw it straight at me, I was so angry. We started to fight. During the fight he tried to strangle me. [Kyoung-Na]

Even though we decided to go out with the children, he just went to work. I had to go alone. [...] I managed all matters concerning the parents-in-law and also my birth family. [...] Even though I was terribly angry about it, it wasn't in his nature to consider my suggestions. We had an argument in the car. He just left me with my child on the street. [...] I was so intimidated by his character. So cold. So, I gradually tended not to ask him anything about family matters.
[Han-Na]

The women's stories above are typical examples of how they started to have arguments with their husbands. They recounted the ways in which marital problems resulted when they challenged their husbands. Dryden argues that

29. Kyoung-Na said that her husband even went out to meet his friends at one or two in the morning when they called.

men's various strategies such as 'undermining, blaming and distancing practices' both physically and emotionally towards their wives are the way to maintain 'hierarchical gender difference', which can then be attributed to women's emotional insecurity or vulnerability in marriage (Dryden, 1999: 147).

As we see through women's accounts, women's and men's troubles in marriage start from trifling issues about daily matters and could result in cessation of communication and even violence³⁰. In this situation, women also raise the question of 'how' they talked with their husbands, moderating the tone and content of what they said. Su-Ji says that 'maybe, I did not have the communication skills to talk well. So, we had many arguments'. Here, the emphasis on 'how' we have to communicate is related to gendered pressure in society to construct 'tender femininity' (Bartky, 1990), as we also see through Mi-Ya's story. Mi-Ya divorced due to her husband's continuous adultery during almost three years of marriage. She shared with me the reaction of her husband's mother and his aunt to his adultery:

Later, they blamed me for his adultery. They told me that I treated him like a child, that I forced him to do things and that I talked to him like a child. [Mi-Ya]

She advised other women not to treat their husbands like children to avoid her experience of being blamed by her ex-husband's family³¹. Women's good communication skills become part of monitoring themselves in relation to the ideal of femininity. Crawford (2004) emphasises that considering men's and

30. Women's experiences of violence will be analyzed in detail in section 4.

31. So-Ra who divorced due to his husband's adultery and irrational jealousy also had similar experience like Mi-Ya.

women's differences as natural and healthy could mask how social structural factors work to influence gendered relations. In addition, considering men's and women's problems as individual issues is a way of de-politicizing gendered relationships (Crawford, 2004: 68-69).

Women's failure to communicate with their husbands and their lack of negotiation power lead to a situation where women gradually fake their emotions and where they keep silent about family matters rather than trying to discuss them. They experience 'shrinking' or even 'fear' of communicating with their husbands.

The first time when I talked with him, I had tears in my eyes and I was talking incoherently. When he was angry about a certain situation, he started to use big words and became so logical when he explained things to me. I felt so small in his presence. Obviously, I started to talk because he had a problem. *However, in the end, it became my fault* [her emphasis]. I don't know when, but gradually, I no longer wanted to open my mouth. Even if I did, there would be no benefit for me. [Min-Hae]

Even though most of the time, I didn't complain to him, when I really could not bear what he was doing and said so, he didn't want to hear it. He didn't care what I said. If I kept asking to talk, he told me I was a crazy woman. [...] He never said anything nice to me. That's why I ended up not wanting to talk with him. [Jeong-Mi]

Women 'being sorry' or gaining 'no benefit' from communication gradually increased their distance from their husbands. This explains why the divorce process was sometimes the first time women expressed their 'real marital problems' to their husbands:

He didn't come back home before 11 even five times over the course of a year. I never complained about it because it was better without him. I didn't complain about it but he might have thought this was because I was a good woman. When I divorced, I mentioned it. 'You have never

complained about it'. That's what he said then. [Jeong-Mi]

I told him that it was so hard to live with him for ten years [when she divorced][...] He was so upset, and said, 'What does that mean? Were you pretending all these years that you were okay?' [Min-Hae]

It is ironic that men intimidate their wives and so discourage them from expressing their feelings and talking, but also complain about 'the lack of sharing' from their wives. Women's silence reflects a gradual process during which they find that they increasingly lack the power to negotiate. Men's silence, on the other hand, indicates that they have the power to decide things by themselves without consulting their wives about family matters. This reflects how male-female power relations are expressed through the dynamics of conversation, constructing 'the reality of their own relationship' (Fishman, 1983: 90). Soo-Yun married an upper middle class man from a wealthy family who had a good job. She and her husband worked together. 'Decision-making' was an important factor in her understanding of the marital breakdown.

Oh [very loud voice]. We grew distant from each other when we were talking about economic issues. [He told me] 'I decided it myself. I'll tell you. Because you are working as well, you have to pay 30% of living cost and I will pay 70% of living cost'. Then, I got so angry about it. [Soo-Yun]

Who made the 'decisions' was a major issue for Soo-Yun. This is not how she thought the relationship of a married couple should be and she said 'Why do I have to live like this?' Soo-Yun found out through her husband's friend that he spent a lot of money on stocks without telling her about it. As I mentioned in the previous section, the men did not discuss how they spent money with their wives. Jeong-Mi also told me that her husband never talked about money and she did not even know that her husband's business was bankrupt and that he

was borrowing a lot of money from the bank with their house as collateral. She expressed her feelings at that time:

I didn't know anything. Everything was destroyed and shattered. I thought to myself, who am I in this marriage? [...] He never discussed things with me. He thought that he could do anything he wanted to. He didn't get anything for us at all. He did everything just in the name of himself as a man, a husband and the head of the family. He did everything at his discretion. [Jeong-Mi]

The way women construct their marital problems in the context of a lack of consultation and men's unilateral decisions about important family matters is clearly related to men's power and women's resistance to it. The majority of the women who claimed that their husbands only needed them as wives connect their sense of non-existence and the lack of intimacy to emptiness and depression.

3.3 Emptiness/Depression/Suffocation

Women's feelings of being in empty marriages and of self-abnegation in marriage are the mirror of their lack of power and often resulted in deep emptiness and depression. These women's self-descriptions and expressions of their own feelings have a particular meaning because women's own perspectives were only discussed when they considered their transitional identities from being married to being divorced. Their individual voices only emerged after long periods of leading lives that were intricately connected with those of their husbands. In a way, they thus 'obtained' their own voices after their marital relationships failed.

Depression is one of the crucial signals that indicate a loss of self in marriage, as Mi-Ya's account stresses her child-centred marriage and the lack of

connection with her husband. Even though Mi-Ya found out about her husband's affair at the beginning of her marriage, when she became pregnant she had 'a small hope' for a better relationship with her husband through having a child. However, having the baby did not result in this:

I always took care of my child alone. I always put my daughter to bed alone. While I was preparing my child for bed, I usually sang a song. I didn't sing a song like 'sleep well our baby' but 'my baby'. [...] It was as if my child only belonged to me rather than being our baby. [...] I don't know when it happened but I had serious depression. What I really [her emphasis] could not stand was that I ended up having an unbelievable image of myself. Later on, I told myself that I was having irrational suspicions about my husband's affair [a long sigh]. [...] I doubted myself [a loud voice]. He didn't change and neither did other people. In a very bad way, I changed myself. *That was really scary* [her emphasis]. I became a different person. That wasn't acceptable to me. So, I decided to survive and for that I needed to find a different life. [Mi-Ya]

Mi-Ya's expressions that 'He didn't change and neither did other people' and 'I changed myself' indicate her long suffering and her loss of belief that her marriage could improve. Mi-Ya indicates that her depression was not her own individual psychological issue but that it resulted from the lack of connection with her husband to whom she committed herself through marriage. Jeong-Mi also said 'In the relationship with my previous husband, there was only the child. There was no husband'. Compared to men's interpretation of women's depression in the context of psychological problems (see chapter 5), women's depression clarified their sense of loss in marriage and the need for change. A similar account comes from Kyoung-Na. Kyoung-Na divorced the same man twice because she thought that her ex-husband would change after their first divorce. So, she lived with him again.

When I turned forty, my depression was serious. There was no future. When I divorced the first time, anyway, I thought that he could change and that there was hope. At the time [during their second marriage], I

realised he could not be different. I started to give up on him. To give up on him, it was like giving up my future. Even though I was positive and tried a lot, there was always a certain distance between us.

[...]

Even though I grew up a lot and turned forty, he was still 28 years old [his age when they got married]. It was impossible to communicate.
[Kyoung-Na]

Kyoung-Na's narrative of depression is clearly related to her commitment to her marriage and to her patience while she waited for her husband to change. Women's continual patience waiting for their husbands to change, and the ultimate failure of this expectation, also links to their sense of unhappiness and self-abnegation in relation to their husbands. This is typically expressed by Su-Ji who suffered from 'suffocating disease'.

In the end, I had the 'suffocating disease'. When I slept, my heart felt suffocated. One year after my marriage, I changed my job. [...] I had to travel around to do my new job. During that time, I saw many things. I then started thinking why am I living such a hard life without giving my opinion? I could walk out of the marriage. My life is still going on! [Su-Ji]

Su-Ji explained how her new job gave her a sense of herself again. Vaughan (1987) analysed how women tried to find alternative ways to obtain their 'self-validation' when, after facing many difficulties, they could no longer deal with their partners in marriage. Vaughan mentions various ways of doing this, for example through education, a new relationship or a new job. This does not mean that women wanted to work to prepare for their divorce but it did become an important way of establishing their own territory (Vaughan, 1987: 28).

Women's vulnerability in marriage caused by their lack of power and their primary concern about men's feelings is clearly related to women's deep emptiness and depression. Therefore, not surprisingly, some women expressed

how they were relieved that they no longer had to take account of their husbands' feelings or bad mood when they divorced.

If I compare my life now with when I was married, I cannot tell you how comfortable I feel now. [...] everyday, when he came back home, I would wonder about what he was going to quarrel with me about.
[Kyong-Na]

At first when I divorced, even though I was suffering and experienced a lot of pain due to the divorce, I was so comfortable with the fact that I didn't need to take account of his feelings. [Min-Hae].

I am so happy and comfortable. Emotionally, anyway, to be able to say what I want to say makes me so comfortable. [Jeong-Mi]

As women's expressions, such as 'depression' and 'emptiness', stress their lack of power in marriage and results in their considering divorce. Violence is also related to male power and to women's consideration that their marriage was beyond hope of saving. As I discussed in section 3.2, in the women's accounts of living with patriarchal men, there is a very strong underlining control over their daily life that causes women to feel afraid of expressing their opinion. Men's physical violence as the crucial way to control their wives and as keeping their power in marriage featured in both groups, when their husbands lacked work or were unemployed, and when men were a 'good' family provider.

4. Violence

Seven women out of seventeen talked about their experience of violence in their marriages and violence was a commonly cited reason for considering divorce. But women's interpretation of men's reasons for being violent differs depending on their husbands' circumstances. When women's husbands failed to have permanent jobs, the majority of the women connected men's violence

to the fact that they did not work outside the home. Yet, two women whose husbands are 'good' family providers connect violence to patriarchal behaviour and control over them.

Men's violence, as the means of control over women's public life, when the men did not have permanent jobs, is expressed by women who are major earners at home. As Ji-Sue says:

He didn't work. His personal work [he painted at home] wasn't good. This situation was probably very painful for him. He had no way to earn money and didn't want to work in a school. Also, he might have felt that I ignored him even though I didn't say anything [Sigh]. Then, he was violent with me. Because he was staying home and I was going out to work, it became much worse in our relationship. [Ji-Sue]

After explaining this situation, she told me how she suffered from his terrible violence a few times and also violence in their sexual relationships. One day, Ji-Sue came back at 12 after drinking with people from her work. Her husband asked her to take off her glasses and hit her. Then he pushed her against a wall and pressed her neck. She said that it felt like 'he was killing me'. This kind of violence happened a few times and he even hit her in front of her baby. She also suffered from his sexual violence and expressed her feeling as 'I am not human'. Ji-Sue's experience of violence did not lead immediately to her divorce as it took a few years before she finally filed for divorce, mainly due to her belief that he would not do it anymore and also his refusal to get divorced. The belief that husbands become worse because of their loss of life goals is also seen in Ju-Ni's story.

His life was going in the wrong direction. Due to his unresolved situation, he became so obsessed with me. [Ju-Ni]

Ju-Ni explained why they had serious arguments and why her husband was violent. Ju-Ni was preparing to be an independent filmmaker. She needed to watch a TV documentary program but her husband wanted to watch the news. She said to him, 'You can watch the news at any other time but this is the only time when I can watch this documentary'. During their argument, he pulled out the TV electric line and then tightened it around her neck. She felt like he was almost killing her and that she was dying. This experience and others like them made her feel that she 'was despairing'. After this incident Ju-Ni stopped living with her husband and she told me that this was the only way she could save her life. Sue-Mi also told me that her husband's unreasonable behaviour became worse when his life was not as good as he wanted. A few times a week, he destroyed household goods and used crude language to her. Six months before Su-Mi's decision to divorce, he also kept checking on everyone she met outside the home. He rang those people to check when they went home in order to confirm whether she told him the truth. Therefore, she would be hesitant about meeting people due to his control over her. During this time, she found that her character changed while she was dealing with these situations. She felt that there was no hope for their relationship.

These women's stories, which occurred when their husbands did not have permanent jobs, reflect how the experience of violence is related to men's attempts to obtain power and cause women to be submissive. Women's physical and psychological damage is also expressed through two women whose husbands are patriarchal family providers. As I discussed in section 3.2, men exert power over their wives through causing fear, silence and blaming women. Violence is also a way men gain control women. Jeong-Mi's and Kyoung-Na's stories both highlight that violence is caused when they disagree with their husbands.

Whenever we had an argument, he told me that 'I am a crazy woman who cannot understand his talk'. One day, I was so angry and [I] threw away [my] chopstick. [He] came straight to me [very scared voice].

Opened the kitchen drawer. There was a knife inside the drawer. He just took the knife out and put it in my hand. He told me to 'Kill him'. [A long pause] I decided myself I never wanted to have an argument again and was not against his opinion [deep sigh] [...] I felt terribly scared. I felt like he tried to kill me. It was a really sharp edged knife. [Jeong-Mi]

We had our first argument [after her marriage]. His mother continuously rang him to ask when we would visit her [They lived separately from his mother due to his job in another place]. To visit home [his parents' house] was his main consideration. He always decided to go to his parents' house without asking me. I kept asking him why he decided to go there without asking me. It is not an issue to go but at least, we have to talk about it. One day, he told me again 'Let's go to [my parents] home next week'. I did not say anything and just kept silent. He asked me to talk. However, what's the point to talk? I just kept washing clothes without saying anything. He was so angry and told me 'Why you are not talking'. I said 'It is useless to talk. Why should I talk?' During our argument, I was so angry I told him 'I don't visit them. Because I hate you, I don't want to go with you.' Straight away he hit me. It was the first violence. The most shocking thing to me was that I never thought that he could be [...] violent to me. [When he hit me] I fell down. Holding me up, he tried to hit me again. He treated me as he did in the army [He was a professional soldier]. [Kyoung-Na]

Men's various behaviours from violence to inducing fear are 'symbolic forms of discipline' that legitimate men voicing their opinions and discipline women not to express themselves (Bloom, 1998: 112). As Jamieson states, 'men's use of their body as a tool and weapon is one source of men's power as men' (1998: 152) but men's violence in marriage is not only an issue inside marriage that causes women's submission to men, it is an ongoing condition that is experienced by women as a deep fear, even long after their divorce, and it leads to an ongoing process of trying to recover memories, as in the case of Young-Hee:

There is not any friend to share my fear with. Because they have not experienced fear, even though I tell them, they don't understand it.

Also, it is so hard to express my fear through language. There is no book to explain my fear even though I have looked for it. Just dig it into my heart. Through the experience [violence], I learnt [about] husband's and men's power. Even though I don't accept it, there was a power I could not escape from. Even though I have tried so many things to keep my life well, suddenly, everything changed. [...] Even after divorce, I hesitate to ask about child support because I felt afraid of asking it due to the experience. [Young-Hee]

Young-Hee's experience of violence in the past contributed to her fear that the same thing would continue to happen in the future, hence her reluctance to ask her husband for money to support their children. Her fear of her husband becomes the means of controlling her past, present and future as well. Ahmed states, 'while the lived experience of fear may be unpleasant in the present, the unpleasant of fear also relates to the future' leading to 'future as an intense bodily experience in the present' (2004: 65).

Women's experience of violence does not lead to a quick decision to divorce, as Kyoung-Na says, 'I always regretted that I did not think of divorce when he was first violent. If I had had been more determined about my life, my life would have been better.' Therefore, in some cases, the final decision to divorce takes many years, and in many cases it only came after they found out that their husbands did not change as they had wished. Smart and Neale state, 'the sort of violence which was destructive of the self was rarely a one-off. It was the sort of violence which had a long history and which had generated physical damage as well as psychological damage' (1999: 149).

Women's experiences of violence become the mirror of the hopelessness in their marriage. They reflect when looking back on their marital life and their experiences of violence become part of their need to find their self-worth. Women also expressed that meeting other men and having an 'affair' could be part of the alternative ways of re-asserting their 'self-validation'.

5. Affairs

Five women out of seventeen talked about their experiences of having affairs, highlighting their affair as an alternative solution to their marital problems. While men focused on sexual problems or fun as the reason for their affairs, women's views of their affairs are constructed in relation to their gendered burden and their dissatisfaction. They also reflect women's different understanding of their sexual relations with their husbands. Women said the problem was that men insisted on sex and even forced them without caring that they were working very hard. Men, on the other hand, consider the frequency of sex itself as the main issue in their intimate relationships (see chapter 5). Women emphasise that their marriages were already over before having affairs and thus, they stress that their affairs were a means of finding self-value.

The interpretation of affair as an indication that the marriages had already ended before the start of the affairs emerges in Jeong-Mi's narrative. Jeong-Mi went to Hawaii for three months in order to escape from her painful marriage. She told me the reason she went to Hawaii was that she thought she could not divorce because of her parents and her child even though she herself already decided to divorce.

There was a really crucial reason I could divorce. [...] There was a really, really dramatic reason. [pause] *I created the reason* [her emphasis]. [...] When I stayed in Hawaii, I met a man [He was American]. He was my child's teacher. [...] When I came back to Korea, we exchanged e-mails. My ex-husband opened my e-mail account and read it. At the time, I continuously asked for a divorce. During that time, he came home very drunk. I didn't know he read my e-mail. [...] He told me, 'I have something to talk about'. He always talked about something important when he was drunk [HaHa]. He said, 'I need to talk. It is such a painful thing to mention. I read your e-mail. I really can't bear it'. He saw my e-mail. For me, it became a reason to think no more [about her marriage]. It was a real chance [She clapped her hands]. I created such a good chance. [Jeong-Mi said to her husband] 'Did you read it [the email]? You know what I did? Now, you found out what I did. Even though I hadn't done anything wrong in the

marriage, you had given me such a painful life, saying that I was mad. You often told me that I was such an impossible person to understand. You had hurt me terribly. I know what I did. It was wrong. OK. It was wrong. In this situation you knew about it [her affair], I don't want a relationship with you any more'. [Jeong-Mi]

Even though she did not talk about her plan to divorce with her husband, her statement 'I created the reason' signifies her determination to divorce. Moreover, it indicates that she interprets her affair as not belonging to the events 'inside marriage'. Jeong-Mi's interpretation of her affair reflects that her marriage was already over before her affair. For Jeong-Mi, her affair was important because it gave her the chance to divorce rather than being about meeting another man. The way in which Jeong-Mi's husband found out about her affair resonates with her statement that he treated her badly even before the affair. Ga-Rim's story also emphasises that her marriage was over before her affair started:

My husband and I were already estranged. [...] While I was having a new relationship, it wasn't like I wanted to marry him. However, during a date [with the new man], I came to the conclusion that there was really no reason to live with him [her husband]. I liked another man. I had all the economic responsibility and worked alone in my marriage. I didn't need to worry about economic matters. So, there was no reason to stay with him. [...] Even though I knew it was wrong. It wasn't wrong because I was a married woman but because during the process of divorce, if this kind of an issue comes out, it could obscure the truth about the divorce. [Ga-Rim]

Both Jeong-Mi and Ga-Rim construct their affairs by distancing their motives from the desire to meet men. Rather, they emphasise that their marital problems were their partners' fault and existed long before their affairs. Ga-Rim told me that 'it [the affair] could obscure the truth about the divorce'. This, as well as Jeong-Mi's interpretation of her affair as something that did not happen inside their marriage, highlights the way in which women construct

their affairs as a way of creating a new self, stressing how their marriage was painful and that it was difficult to divorce. This is related to other women's interpretations of their affairs in the context of finding the 'courage' to divorce.

I was staying in my friend's house [She ran away from her home after suffering serious violence at the hands of her husband]. Then, I came back home because of my child. However, something that people could be concerned about happened to me. I was fond of a man. It was just affection. My husband did not notice it. [...] At that time, he was violent with me a few times and he was sexually violent continuously. I lost all feeling for him. Ever since the sexual violence started, I gave up living as a human being. I only thought that I would divorce when my child grows up. At that time, I didn't think of divorce. [...] After having such kind experiences with this other man, I had a strong feeling that I did not want to live like this. I found out that I could still love someone. Life is long. I could have my new life. I hadn't thought of it. I could meet a new man and also be happy. Therefore, I became more determined to divorce. [...] Thanks to him [the other man], I found the courage to divorce. It doesn't mean that I really love him and it doesn't mean that I want to marry him but he did play a certain role. [Ji-Sue]

Ji-Sue's story indicates that her relationship with a new man increased her resolve to have a different life. These women's new relationships do not involve wanting to meet other men whom they want to marry. Rather, their affairs create a 'transitional space' to find a new life and escape from their unhappy marriages. Affairs become the mirror in which they view their marriages. In this sense, their affairs shed a new light on their self-worth. Moreover, women see their affairs as something that gave them the courage to find their new lives, as Jo-An states:

Even though I didn't think of the divorce [before meeting a new man], I might always have been looking for some chance because I continuously thought that our relationship did not work. My present husband definitely gave me courage. [Jo-An]

Jo-An's account of how her meeting with a new man led to a concrete decision to divorce is similar to Mi-Ya's. Mi-Ya met a man she had loved before her marriage and she talked to him when she was thinking about divorce.

During our talks, [he told me] 'You are still pretty. You are the same as when we first met'. When he said 'You are still pretty' it was like saying that my life could still move on. You could be happy. [She talks to herself] 'You are pretty. What are you doing? You can do it'. Those words made the crucial difference that enabled me to divorce. [...] They were really important words to me. [...] When the person I loved told me this, it gave me the courage to start to find my life again. [Mi-Ya]

Women's affairs do not only mean that their marriages are over. Rather, they are related to finding ways of escaping from marriages that were making them feel that they were non-existent. This was very different from the ways in which men described their affairs (see chapter 5). Women's affairs enabled them to become more critical about the whole of their marriages and helped them to find new identities beyond their unhappy marriages. When women talk about their motives for divorce as well as about their affairs, they focus on how they saw their own identities within their marriages.

6. Summary

Hackstaff states that 'marriage culture should be understood as a cluster of beliefs, symbols and practices, framed by material conditions, that reinforce marriage and deter divorce' (Hackstaff, 1999: 1). Women's interpretations of their divorce regardless of their motives to divorce stress how their attempts to keep the commitment of marriage mirror male dominance (Hackstaff, 1999: 214). While men mainly focus on what they had done well or had not done well and construct their stories around certain moments and events, women's stories are embedded within the whole marriage and these stories are shaped by

their status in marriage. Women whose husbands had economic difficulties highlight women's gendered responsibility to care about men's sense of failure, as well as economic problems, and the fact that men did not change, regardless of women's sacrifices. These women are simultaneously 'trying to equalise' their marital relationships and also 'trying to avoid having too much power' (Stamp, 1985: 554). Women whose husbands are patriarchal family providers expressed their lack of intimacy in relation to men's control over daily family matters and demands for submissive wives. These women emphasised their struggles between the changing meaning of family and marriage and men's patriarchal behaviours. Even though women's major interpretations of marital problems divide into two issues, 'work' and 'intimacy, there is strong similarity in their long sacrifices, endurance of their miserable life, and loss of self in the name of the family and commitment.

Women's narratives express how they raised the question of who they were in their marriages and how their answers made them realise that they wanted new identities beyond their stifling marriages (see chapter 8). Men explained their divorces in relation to their faults and they talked about what they could have changed if they had more money or time and how these changes could have saved their marriages. None of the men talked about questioning their sense of self and their status while they were married. When women talked about their lives after divorce, they mainly discussed their new sense of self and how their identities have changed after divorce. However, when women found their new selves through their decision to divorce, they did not make a clean break from their marriage and immediately divorce. On the contrary, these discoveries and decisions took the form of a long and painful journey to take the decision to divorce and also the suffering during the process of their divorce which is influenced by cultural and familial circumstances (see chapter 7). Only after women go through this long process were they able to articulate their stories and allow their voices to be heard (chapter 8).

CHAPTER 7

THE PROCESS OF DIVORCE

1. Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I argued that the different ways in which women and men make sense of their marital problems and consequent divorces reflect gendered power relationships within marriage. Even though each participant's situation has unique aspects, the social and cultural contexts in which women and men are situated produce remarkably gendered accounts. Their stories of divorce, in other words, can be divided into her stories and his stories.

In this chapter, I will explore how they arrive at the particular decisions they make in their attempts to resolve the problems that emerge during the process of divorce and focus on the ways in which experiences of divorce are shaped by legal considerations as well as the impact that persuasion and negotiation have on the process. Kitson and Morgan find that the pre-separation period is often described as the most distressing part of the divorce process (1990). Most of the women and men in my study noted that the major difficulties they faced during the divorce process were related to attempts to reach agreements through negotiation. The participants thus did not see a divorce as something that could be accomplished only according to their individual wishes and desires. On the contrary, the importance of gaining family support for the divorce and of resolving problems of child custody/ support and property divisions means that negotiation and agreement are central parts of the divorce process.

The three issues mentioned above pose particular challenges to women and men according to their status as well as their relationships with their birth

families, children and marital partners. I will explore how men and women experience these issues differently. The ways in which they restructure their relationships after divorce are shaped by their identities as sons and daughters within their birth families and by their identities as mothers and fathers to their children and as husbands and wives to their marital partners. All these identities are closely interconnected during the process of divorce. The divorce process is a 'socially negotiated construct' and it involves 'identit[ies] with multiple meanings' and cannot be understood solely as a legal procedure or as merely a personal experience (Sandfield, 2006: 158).

Women tend to express the difficulties they faced during the divorce process in relation to how the divorce affected other people, particularly their children and their families. They also attribute their struggles to the Korean legal and cultural environment, which regards women as powerless and as inferior to men. Women's stories of the processes that led to the final legal dissolution of their marriages make it clear that the fact that they initiate more divorces than men does not necessarily mean that they have much power in or control over the process (Walzer and Oles, 2003). Kitson and Holmes (1992) note that divorces often involve violence and control by men. Walzer and Oles also contend that men feel that their power is jeopardized when women express dissatisfaction and initiate divorce and that men then try to regain power by controlling the divorce process (2003: 346, see also Vaughan, 1987).

The process of divorce must be also understood within the context of cultural factors that are unique to Korea. Divorces in Korea are inevitably shaped by the involvement of both partners' families. As marriage is closely interconnected with family, divorce and family are similarly intertwined. Both men and women experience profound familial pressures during the divorce process.

2. Divorce: A Family's Decision

I will discuss how divorce tends to adhere to a gendered script by illustrating the pressures my interviewees were subjected to by their parents which in many cases resulted in the delaying of divorce. By exploring the 'feelings' that people have about their parents during their divorce processes I will identify gendered similarities and differences. According to Hoshschild, '[f]eeling can be a subjective thing but as certain behaviors are unevenly distributed across layers of society and the stream of time, so too we need to ask whether and why the various emotions, such as joy or depression, unfold in ways that reflect larger social patterns' (Hochschild, 2003:77). Throughout the interviews, both male and female respondents talk about feeling 'sorry' for their parents during and after their divorces. In my sample, 24 of the 31 respondents said that they found it most difficult to discuss their divorces with their parents. They were particularly concerned about how their mothers would react. A few respondents did not say because their parents had died. This reflects the extent to which individuals' divorces and concern for their families are interconnected. In Korean society, children's successes and failures are not separated from their parents as the failure of a child is also regarded as the failure of the parent, especially in the case of mothers. Mothers' identities are intertwined with those of their adult children. Therefore, divorce can cause the mothers of the couple to experience a sense of shame and failure. This reality helps to explain why both men and women who divorce tend to be very concerned about how their mothers will be affected. The sense of shame that men, women and their mothers feel is related to the fact that they do not follow 'the scripts of normative existence' (Ahmed, 2004: 107). Shame as 'the primary social emotion' is drawn from 'constant monitoring of the self and others' (Scheff, 1994: 79).

However, the reciprocal emotional interaction between divorced women or men and their parents reveals that feelings about divorce unfold in distinctly different ways in the family, and that these differences are gendered. For this

reason, I will focus on men's accounts first and move onto women's accounts.

2.1 Sons' Divorce

While most of the male interviewees express concern for their parents, they all talked particularly about their mothers. Even when they talk about their parents, they tend to attribute their decision to delay divorce to their mothers. Some of the male interviewees actually emphasized that divorce was primarily a matter of their individual choice by saying, for example, 'There is nothing my mother can do. If I do not like marriage, that's it' (Gi-Chan) and 'I chose divorce because that's what I wanted' (Chul-Su). However, it turned out to be that it is not that simple in a sense, because they were also concerned about their mother. For example, Gi-Chan expresses his feelings about his mother during his divorce by explaining how her anticipated reaction led to the delay in his divorce:

I was so anxious about my mother. Of course, now my mother helps with my children a lot, but before my mother put me under a lot of pressure not to divorce. If it was not for my mother, I could have divorced earlier. Even though my children would also have found it harder, I might have divorced earlier. [Gi-Chan]

The reactions men anticipated from their parents often prevented them from openly discussing their divorces with their parents, both during the divorce and after the process had been completed. This is particularly clear in Min-Su's account of his 'secretive' divorce. Although he divorced three years ago, he has still not told his mother.

I was afraid that my mother might collapse. One day, I expressed my personal negative opinion about marriage. I told my mother that marriage is just a system designed to control people's lives. I said it's

not a system that makes people's lives any happier or easier. Well, I said this because I knew that some day she will come to know about my divorce [Deep sigh]. I also told my mother not to care about other people's lives. I said, 'Even though you pray for other people's happiness, their lives do not continue to go well just because you wish it to. There is always happiness and sadness. You can do nothing about that. Just make yourself happy. Do not worry about other people'. And she said, 'For me, my son and my daughter-in-law's happiness is everything I wish for. That is my only wish'. If I mentioned my divorce, she might have cried bitterly [...] I feel like I'm walking on a thin sheet of ice [a long pause]. [Min-Su]

Min-Su describes his personal view of marriage, which is far more negative than the traditional idea of marriage. Yet, in choosing divorce, he finds himself in a complicated situation where his decision to divorce (for the sake of his personal happiness) and his mother's happiness, which is contingent on his marriage, are not easily reconcilable. He finds that being secretive or silent about his divorce is the easiest way in which he can negotiate his choice to divorce with his mother. Since the decision to divorce is not something that can easily be communicated to the family, many male respondents either remained silent or only discussed their divorces with their families when they had been finalized. For example, Hee-Tae, Hyun-Gil and Chul-Su stated that it was easier to inform their parents about their divorces than attempting to discuss it with them, as Hyun-Gil's account reveals:

The first time I lived separately from my wife for six months, my parents even asked an exorcist to visit our house in order to ward off divorce. But soon [...] they could do nothing but accept my divorce. I simply informed them that I had already divorced. If I talked about divorce during the process, [pause] well how could I even dare to talk about it [divorce] with my parents? [...] Thinking about the small village in which they live, if other people came to know about my divorce, it would destroy my parents' sense of having 'face'. Nevertheless, they soon understood me and my decision. When I told them about how I had lived during my marriage, they said, 'You are not a baby and when I was your age I delivered you. I respect your decision'. [Hyun-Gil]

The silence and regret surrounding the divorce are intimately bound up with social prejudice related to divorcee. As we can see from Hyun-Gil's case, he did not discuss the possibility of divorce with his parents because he wanted his parents to be able to save face. His account shows how divorce can be experienced negatively by the wider family, particularly by parents because of the stigma attached to it. A divorced son or daughter could be a symbol of disgrace in the family, and could ruin parents' reputation.

Many men said they felt sorry for their parents, especially for their mothers. Even when the men's parents do not necessarily want to criticize their sons, they are very concerned about the social implications that the decision to divorce will have for them. The social consequences of divorce impacts on the parents' own sense of identity, as well as to their concern about the effect the divorce will have on their sons' and grandchildren's future. However, within the home, there is no specific rearrangement of the relationship between parents and their divorced sons. The divorce only gains importance and relevance outside of the home. Most male parents register their unhappiness with the idea of divorce, rather than expressing blame, shame and anger at their sons. However, as we will see below, parents' attitudes to women often change in significant ways.

2.2 Daughters' Divorce

Like the male interviewees, the female interviewees also expressed their concern for their parents, especially their mothers, during and after the divorce. Jeong-Mi's feelings about her mother are typical in this regard:

I thought I could never talk about divorce to my family under any circumstances. [...] When I thought of divorce [pause] most of the other issues were bearable. When I thought of my mother however,

[she started crying and the interview stopped for a little while]. [...] Whenever I talk about my mother, I feel sorry for my mother. [Jeong-Mi]

Although both male and female participants express similar feelings of being sorry for their parents, when we consider the ways in which parents become involved in the divorce process, a somewhat different and distinctly gendered picture emerges. The female interviewees' parents were often deeply involved in the process of determining a right time for divorce. The parents tended to accept divorce when their daughters were victims of unhappy marriages and that the breakdown of the marriages could be attributed to some fault of the men. In particular, parents regarded men's refusal to take economic responsibility as a reason for divorce. The situations in which divorce is acceptable are thus clearly linked to parents' understanding of the ideal marriage – the man as the breadwinner and the woman as a housewife who is dependent on her husband. In the absence of this condition, parents often oppose their daughter's divorce.

After I had been married for five years, I told my father 'I am finding it so hard to live with him.' At the time, the man [her ex-husband] was about to get a PhD degree [Both stayed in Paris for his study]. My father told me 'If you divorce, how could he get his PhD? Don't make things so complicated for him'. I had to give up the idea. Also, I went back to Korea and had a child again. So, I lived on. [Min-Hae]

A year after marriage, I felt it [marriage] was not working. I dropped a hint about divorce to my mother. My mother said, 'It is impossible. How dare you even mention it?' My mother would not even allow me to bring up the subject again. At that time, I was suffering so much from such a difficult marriage, and thought of dying because of that [deep sigh]. I did not know why I had to live. Then I gave up thinking of divorce because of my parents [a long pause]. I thought I should just do what my husband wanted me to do because I could not divorce. [Mi-Ran]

Parents' refusal to grant their approval denies women's subjective experiences of marriage and reinforces the notion that the marriage is a woman's place. They only understand women's suffering when they regard their daughters as victims and they consider this to be a valid reason to get a divorce. This is particularly clear in Mi-Ran's case. The almost four year gap between Mi-Ran's initial wish to divorce and her parents' eventual decision to 'allow' her divorce reflects that her parents mainly understood her suffering in terms of her husband's lack of work. As she stated:

In January in 2001, my father suddenly told me that he decided. So I asked, 'What did you decide?' Then my father said, 'Son-in-law is already dismissed from our family'. He said, 'You have suffered enough from this difficult marriage. We already decided it a long time ago. We were just not sure. We thought that it might be better not to rush things. We just wanted to be careful about our decision. So we kept an eye on how things were going. But not any more. We even talked with your brother as well. We made a decision during our family meeting. Now it is time for you to think about divorce. As far as I and your mother are concerned, we do not know why you have to live like this'. My father also said, 'How could this situation get any worse? He does not regularly contribute to living costs. He keeps talking about giving up his job, making your life unstable. His family also behaves the same. You are helping them, but receiving nothing'. My father suggested that I seriously consider what he said. [Mi-Ran]

Mi-Ran's parents' change of mind about her divorce in the context of men's lack of financial responsibility is similarly found in Young-Hee's story.

We [Young-Hee and her ex-husband] lived with my parents in the same house. Initially, they [her parents] were so much against my wish to divorce. [...] However, after seeing his long unemployment [long pause]. My father is a kind of person who thinks that a man who is not working for his family is committing his worst sin – my father is still working. So my parents wanted me to divorce. [Young-Hee]

These women's narratives highlight that women's parents often took responsibility for making the 'right' decision, balancing considerations of their daughter's happiness and of the stigma of divorce. They thus waited until there was a socially acceptable reason for divorce before permitting it. This allows parents to maintain that the divorce was not their daughters' fault. However, even when women's parents agree to a divorce, their mothers tend to see divorce as a failure on their daughters' part.

My mother resisted divorce until the end. Not because of me [pause] Not because she felt pity for me, but for her [pause]. Not because I found it hard, but because she found it hard. I was so angry about it. [Min-Hae]

To be honest, I am still very angry with my mother. I have a better relationship with my father now, because [pause]. For one thing. At least, my father admitted that he forced me into it [marriage]. My mother never admitted her fault.³² [Mi-Ran]

Min-Hae and Mi-Ran's accounts illustrate how their mothers also suffer and experience a sense of emotional loss when their daughters divorce. The mothers also face moral struggles. Mi-Ran notes that her 'mother never admitted her fault'. It is difficult for mothers to accept that they have any 'fault' in their daughters' divorces. This is particularly challenging for mothers living the middle class ideal where it is important that the family projects a positive image to the outside world (Kim Hae Ryeon, 1995). Some mothers' reluctance to accept their daughters' divorce and the social change divorce brings with it results in a changed relationship with their daughters after divorce. This emerges very clearly in the cases where women move back to their birth

32. Mi-Ran's anger is related to the pressure her mother placed on her to marry her husband and to break up with the boyfriend she had at the time (see chapter 3)

families after divorce.

My mother felt terribly ashamed. If someone came to my house, she asked me to hide quickly. When my relatives visit, I even have to go out. She was so depressed because of my divorce. [Mi-Ya]

The mother's shame causes her to treat her divorced daughter like a 'secret' and to pretend that she does not exist when people visit their home. Other women also told about their mother's shame and sadness.

Min-Hae: At first after I divorced, I really hated my mother. I did not even talk to her. I really wanted to tell her that she was ruining my life. The words were on the tip of my tongue. After my divorce, my mom was busy hiding it [her divorce] from her friends or to anyone in the neighbourhood. When I stayed home, if her friends visited, I had to go out [a deep sigh]

SN: *It must have been difficult for you.*

Min-Hae: It was worse when I think of my children [She has not been able to see her children since the divorce]. My mother kept telling me, 'Are you sad because of your children? I am terribly sad because of you' [very upset voice]. She said things like this to me. [Min-Hae]

Some women are forced to deal with their parents' shame and their altered relationship partly because of their economic dependence on their parents after divorce – especially when they move back in with their parents. For this reason, two women I interviewed said that they did not 'return home'. So-Ra, for example, was having serious economic difficulties at the time of the interview. As she told me that her birth family was quite well-off, I asked her if her parents did not ask her to come 'home' to live with them.

So-Ra: Sister, [she called me sister], think about it. Going back home after divorce would be like sitting on thorns.

SN: *Didn't your parents ask you to come home to live with them?*

So-Ra: No. But I understand them. If guests were to visit my parents' house, what would they think of a divorced daughter with a child? It does not look good. [So-Ra]

If So-Ra did not 'return home' because of the sense of shame and embarrassment her parents would experience in relation to her divorce, Han-Na resisted returning home because she did not want her parents to control her post-divorce life. As she stated:

I did not want to depend on my father. If I had lived with them, my father would have controlled my life. [...] After divorce, I tried really hard to be economically independent. Now, my parents do not worry about me any more, and they no longer interfere in my life. [Han-Na]

The idea of 'returning home' is not, however, always expressed negatively by divorced women. In the cases where women do get emotional support from their parents, it provides them with a safety net, as Su-Ji's account reveals:

My mother fully supported me and helped me to do it [divorce]. Without hesitation, she packed all my stuff. HaHaHa [a big laugh]. After packing everything, she moved all my stuff to Chinjeong [her birth family's house]. Well, how can I describe about my mother? [pause]. My mother is my protective wall. My mother told me 'even though you are divorced, you can live well and these days it is not a flaw'. I started living with my parents again. All my family members treated me very well. [Su-Ji]

Su-Ji's description of her mother's decisive attitudes and actions reflects how her mother's swift removal of her possessions served as a sign that she could move on to her new life after her painful marriage. Yet, it also reflects how the 'safe' decision of divorce for many women is closely connected with their

family's support and agreement to their divorce.

Although the women were the ones who actually had to file for divorce, the sense of feeling 'powerless' in divorce here reveals a gender disparity, because none of the male interviewees mentioned that their parents had initiated their divorces or had decided on 'the right time for divorce'. Rather, they said that they acted, more or less, as individual agents.

The differences between the ways in which women and men are treated by family members during the divorce process reflect the difference in their status in the family as well as social and cultural factors. Different identities as mothers and fathers also help to explain the gendered variations in how men and women experience the divorce process, in particular their child custody disputes.

3. Divorce: Child Custody Disputes

Since 1990 new family laws in Korea have enabled women to claim their property, child custody and parental rights when they divorced. Before that, children legally belonged to their fathers because, in Korea, children were considered as the maintainers of the father's patriarchal clan (Byeon Hwa Soon, 1996). Although the family law now allows divorced women to have child custody rights, the situation is different from that of the West. For example, in the U.K, the legislators provide a few guiding principles to determine the child's best interest. However, the main consideration is which parent has the most emotional contact and the actual custody of the child. The mother would consequently be favoured in most cases concerning a young child (Sandberg, 1989: 103; see also Smart, 1989).³³ In Korea, however, the

33. Since the late 1980s, the government in the U.K has passed a series of legislation – such as the Children's Act (1989), the Child Support Act (1991), and the Family Law Act (1996) – to promote 'joint-parenting' for 'the welfare of the child' of divorced parents. Yet, without much changes in the way fathers actually 'do' parenting, the emphasis on

court decision concerning child custody is primarily dependent on the economic status of the parents and the legal decision regarding whose fault the divorce was (Byeon Hwa Soon, 1996). While women are seen as the primary carers of children in both the West and Korea, mothers in custody disputes in Korea are less likely to gain custody of their children after divorce.

Table 10: Who Gains Child Custody

	children in marriage	Bringing up child after divorce
Yun-Ja (FEMALE))	A son	Herself
So-Ra	A daughter	Herself/ ex-husband's mother(recently)
Min-Hae	Two sons	Ex-husband
Young-Hee	A daughter	Herself
Kyoung-Na	One son and two daughters	Ex-husband
Ju-Ni	A daughter	Herself
Mi-Ya	A daughter	Ex-husband
Na-Ri	A son	Exhusband's mother /Herself (later)
Jeong-Mi	A son	Herself
Ji-Sue	A son	Ex-husband/ Herself (later)
Han-Na	A daughter and son	Interviewee with a daughter and ex-husband's mother with a son
Chang-Jin (MALE)	A daughter	Ex-wife
Tae-Soo	A son	Ex-wife
Gi-Chan	A daughter and son	His mother
Min-Su	A son	Ex-wife
Hong-Sye	A son	His mother/ ex-wife (later)
Hee-Tae	A daughter and son	His mother
Sang-Chul	A daughter	His mother
Chul-Su	A son and daughter	His mother and himself (recently)

Chang and Min found that 79.6% of 127 women attributed most of their

'joint-parenting' for 'the welfare of the child' means that the burden of the emotional work for 'joint-parenting' often falls on the women: many women feel that they are still doing 'wives' for their ex-husbands (see, Smart and Neale, 1999).

suffering during divorce to the difficulties of gaining custody and asserting their parental rights (Chang Hye Kyung and Min Ga Young, 2002). This is also evident in my sample. 11 of the women and 8 men had children during their marriage. 8 of the 11 women who had children kept custody of their children and 4 of the 8 men with dependent children did so (see table above). The majority of women talked about their struggles concerning their children and described child custody as the main difficulty they faced during their divorces. I will discuss how a set of ideas about 'children's needs' affect child custody cases in Korea and how the process of gaining custody involves gendered negotiations of idealized notions of motherhood and fatherhood.

3.1 The Bond Between Mothers and Children

When women explain why they delayed their divorces for long periods of time, they note that the ideal family is one in which the children live with both parents. Kyoung-Na's story is typical of this concern:

I did not want to break up my marriage because of my children. My character was influenced by the fact that I grew up without a father. Even though I have many good characteristics, I have some weaknesses. My family members all struggle to be affectionate.

Kyoung-Na's story describes the ideal family as one in which children receive sufficient affection from both their parents and this ideal is the main reason for trying to save a failed marriage. Therefore, women's stories about their decision to divorce are constructed within the situation that their marriage was not a good place for their children, emphasizing divorce was better for their children's well-being. Na-Ri explains this as follows:

People told me that I should not divorce for the sake of my child. However, I really thought that I had to divorce for my child. When my

child was in kindergarten he circled a certain date in red pen on the calendar. So I asked to him what this date means. He said, 'That is the date when mother and father had a very bad fight. I was so scared on that date'. I was struck by my son's pain. [Na-Ri]

Smart and Neale argue that women make the transition of divorce in a state of connectedness but that this connectedness is through their children (1999: 141). Social and cultural assumptions about motherhood that see mothers as inseparable from their children mean that mothers' decisions and their children's needs should be considered together. These assumptions also help to explain the pain the women feel when their partners gain custody of the children after divorce:

I asked him for a divorce but he never wanted to divorce, saying that 'I would never become violent with you and I would do everything the way you want'. However, his behaviour did not change and give me any hope. The only issue was my child. He knew I could not live without my child. So, he refused to let me keep our child. I kept begging him to give me the child. I could not live without my son. However, he continued to refuse. I became crazy. People told me 'Just get a divorce first. He cannot take care of him. Later, you can live with your son. Other people have done it like that'. I was emotionally exhausted. So, I told him that I would give up the child and we then got divorced [a long sigh]. [Ji-Sue]

I suffered terribly when he kept telling me that he would not let me keep our child. It led me to ask myself for the first time: 'Can I live without my child?' Eventually I told him: 'Okay, I'll let you take care of the child.'[...] Some time later he told me that I could have the child. If he had agreed earlier I would not have hesitated to get a divorce. [Jeong-Mi]

Ji-Sue cried a great deal when she talked about the time she was separated

from her son³⁴. Jeong-Mi and Na-Ri³⁵ went through similarly painful processes of considering whether they could live without their children. Na-Ri said that, prior to thinking about divorce, 'I had never imagined living separately [from my child]'. The women's pain is exacerbated by their belief that children need their mother. This belief is not a natural consequence of the mother/child bond. Rather, it is influenced by the fact that they do not consider men capable of caring for their children. Jeong-Mi told me that '[H]e knew he could not take care of a child' and Ji-Sue also mentioned that 'People told [her] that he can not take care of a child'. As long as motherhood is constituted in relation to 'truths' about the natural 'need' of the child which produces knowledge of a 'natural' bond between 'the nature of children and the normative behavior of mothers' (Lawler, 1999: 70), it naturally becomes a 'truth' that fathers are not regarded as the primary carers of children. Lawler argues that fathers get social attention in relation to their children's needs but that this is mainly related to '*absent fathers (italics in original)*' (1999: 70). These assumptions about motherhood and fatherhood form the basis of women's belief that children need their mother. Women also understand their husbands' refusal to relinquish custody as a way of exerting control over the divorce process. Women's belief that they should be the main carers of children affects the way in which they interpret their children's well-being after divorce. While So-Ra did not have any work experience, she felt that she had to care for her daughter because ex-husband could not do so properly.

[When I divorced] I felt so scared of living alone with my child without having any work experience. However, I thought that I had to take care of my child. If my child had to grow up there [her husband's family] she would certainly turn out to conduct herself badly. [So-Ra]

34. Ji-Sue could live with her son later. I will explain the process in the later part.

35. Na-Ri also could live with her son later as I will explain the process later.

Even though So-Ra's economic situation meant that she would find it financially difficult to care for her child, she chose to keep her child after the divorce to ensure the child's well-being. Na-Ri has similar beliefs about what would be best for her son. However, So-Ri and Na-Ri differ in that Na-Ri was unable to gain custody of her child. Since Na-Ri's husband refused to divorce or to let her have custody of their child, Na-Ri's divorce took two years. She explains why she finally decided to divorce even though she could not get custody:

Regardless of who ended up taking care of my son, he was the main victim. 'What is the best thing for him?' I thought of that for a long time [a long sigh]. Maybe, for my child, it would be better to stay with his grandmother. While I had to work, his grandmother could stay with him all the time. So, [I told him] 'O.K. You can take care of him. Let's divorce.' [Deep sigh]

Na-Ri's final decision to divorce is related to her belief that her son would be well taken care of with his grandmother rather than with his father. Her statement that 'his grandmother could stay with him all the time' reveals her care and affection for her son. Yun-Ja also talked about her child's well-being as a central factor in her divorce. She says that she wanted custody of their child because her husband was not an able care giver: 'If he would have gained custody, I could not have divorced'.

Women's different concerns about their children's well-being after divorce, regardless of whether they gain custody of their children, reflect women's identities as mothers. The social construction of motherhood makes any decision about child custody a long struggle. The legal process of determining child custody also contributes to women's pain when they are separated from their children.

3.2 The Law and the Reality

Women's narratives in relation to their experiences of the legal process involved child custody disputes as well as women's concerns about their children's well-being. Two women, Ji-Sue and Na-Ri, did not go to court to gain custody after their husbands refused to give them custody. Ji-Sue's choice not to go to court and rather to abide by her husband's decision can be traced back the social tendency to give men priority in child custody cases when it is not clear that the divorce is their fault. Ji-Sue discussed her experience of visiting the legal aid center :

They [in the civil service] told me that it is almost one hundred percent certain that my ex-husband would get custody of our child because his parents are rich. [Ji-Sue]

Ji-Sue's experience reflects how little chance women have of gaining custody through the legal system. I also asked Na-Ri why she did not initiate legal proceedings after she continuously asked her husband for custody over a period of two years.

I just never thought of that before. 'Why?' [She laughs]. I don't know why. I don't know the reason. Maybe it was because of the social sentiment which is not on women's side. Perhaps I did not try because I thought that the legal process would not support me. Also, if he [her ex-husband] was a terribly bad person who took no responsibility for our child, I might have tried a legal process but I did not want to end up as a bad person who said negative things about my son's father in front of a judge. People only choose a legal process when it is obvious that their husbands are bad people. A person I know went to court because it was impossible to communicate with her husband and because he was violent. Therefore, people who knew her [Na-Ri's friend] supported the legal process to gain custody. Without people's support, I could not even conceive of going to court. [Na-Ri]

Na-Ri's story reflects the fact that the decision to engage in a legal process is not easy. Rather, it involves many considerations, such as people's support and whether the partner is obviously unsuitable as a parent. She also attributes her decision not to go to court to the lack of social support and her sense of feeling disempowered. Among women, only Ju-Ni went to the court to get divorce but seven years after she started living apart from her husband³⁶. Her reason for not using the legal system is related to her concern for her daughter.

Even though I wanted to divorce, he said 'There is no possibility of divorcing. This is just something you want'. Although he was not happy, he kept refusing to divorce. A year after I delivered my daughter in 1993, we started living separately. But I could only divorce him in 2001. The reason it took so long time was that I worried about my daughter. I was worried that the judge might want her to testify in court. Therefore, I kept trying to persuade him but all my efforts failed and eventually I used the legal system to divorce. [Ju-Ni]

Ju-Ni's long struggle to divorce can be attributed to her concern that the process might have a negative impact on her child. In Korea, children can be called to testify in court about which parent they want to live with. Three women referred to the possibility that their children might have to testify in order to explain why they hesitated to initiate divorce proceedings.

Women's experiences and understandings of the legal system make them feel that they would have no control over the process in child custody disputes. Women's pain during the process of divorce is thus related to social and cultural views about mother's lives and the unequal relationship between women and men. Their stories reveal how they struggled with the issue of custody and how living without their children resulted in social stigma and

36. The Korean divorce law does not allow for divorce on the grounds of long separation and the notion of the West's 'no-fault' divorce is not applicable in Korea (see more chapter 1).

affected how they saw themselves as 'good mothers'.

3.3 Good/Bad Mothers

The three women who did not have custody of their children after divorce all talked about the social stigma they experienced and how they struggled to negotiate their roles as good mothers.

Most people told me 'Chul-Min [her son's name]'s father was changed [since the divorce]. Why don't you live with your husband again for the sake of your child? Is your dream 'Taedanhae'³⁷?' Neither my mother nor other people understood my decision. Most people told me that I had to go back for my child. I was just seen as such a selfish woman. [Angry voice] [Ji-Sue]

Even my sister who shared all the painful experiences during her marriage told me 'You are so bad. I could not divorce if I could not live with my child'. I told her that it was worse for a child to see a mother's unhappiness and parents' arguments. When I explained it like that, people said that maybe I was right. However, women are generally expected to endure bad marriages for the sake of their children. [Na-Ri]

Ji-Sue's and Na-Ri's stories reflect how their identities as mothers continue to inform their decisions after divorce. Social stigma leads to a moral dilemma when women try to explain why they live apart from their children. Even when their ex-husbands refuse to relinquish custody, women are subjected to moral judgements of being bad or selfish when they do not live with their children (see Kim Hae Ryeon, 1995).

Both Ji-Sue and Na-Ri were reunited with their children: in the first case, because the child was unhappy with the paternal grandmother and, in the

37. The term means 'greatness', but it also connotes the selfishness of only thinking about one's own dreams.

second case, because the child became seriously ill. Thus, they could live with their children again because of the children's needs rather than their own needs. This reveals a 'hierarchy of needs' (Smart and Neale, 1997: 16) where children's needs are prioritised above those of mothers and where the needs of both are subject to the power of the father. Ji-Sue could only live with her son again after a long process and it also involved living with her ex-husband again. She eventually moved out again because her ex-husband did not change his behaviour. Lawler argues that the emphasis on 'child-centredness' allows 'the subjectivity of the mother [to be] entirely effaced' (2000: 137). This results in women's sense of self being constructed around being 'a good mother', as Min-Hea's story illustrates. Min-Hae divorced in 2001. She has not been allowed any contact with her two sons since then. Min-Hae chose to divorce because she wanted to live happily with her children and she thought that it would be better for her children to divorce. However, the process of divorce ended very differently from the way she envisioned it.

My parents-in-law told me 'If you do not divorce, we will let you see your children' [Min-Hae moved out in order to divorce]. When I told them that I wanted a divorce, my mother-in-law said that I could see my children when the divorce case was over.³⁸ I left the house [the place where she lived during the marriage] in March 2001 and the case was over in February 2002. It took one year. I then went to see my children. They told me that my children did not want to see me. I went again the next day. However, they had already hidden them away. I went to see a lawyer to ask for a solution. The lawyer told me that he couldn't do anything about the situation [...] Even though I had visitation rights to see my children after the divorce, my ex-husband was not obligated to respect these rights. To resolve it, I had to initiate legal proceedings but he could still prevent me from seeing them if he paid a fine. I became so angry when I talked to my lawyer that I felt as if my blood was boiling. I have not seen my children since 2002. [...] It took almost two years for me to think about my children and feel ok. I felt like dying when I even saw a kindergarten bus. I thought I would

38. The case was started because Min-Hae's husband transferred their house from his name to his father's name to prevent her from getting any property after the divorce.

go crazy when I saw my friends' children. I could not even mention my children. In the beginning, I felt so much pain about not being *a perfect mother* [my emphasis]. It was so hard not to fulfil any of my roles as a mother. I could not handle the thought that they might think of me as a bad mother, I could not bear it. I recovered from those feelings when I accepted that I might be *a bad mother* [my emphasis] to them. What could I do? I still feel so guilty because I left them to live with my mother-in-law but I could not live with him [her ex-husband]. [Min-Hae]

Min-Hae suffered a great deal when she could not see her children but she had no power when her ex-husband and his parents refused contact. Min-Hae noted that, although there is a legal provision for granting visitation rights, these rights cannot be enforced and there is no legal punishment if they are disregarded (Chang Hye Kyung and Min Ga Young, 2002). Min-Hae's fear of being regarded as 'a bad mother' reflects the pain of losing her identity as a good mother and she ultimately moved on to the next stage of her life by accepting her situation. Min-Hae uses 'the cultural symbolic tools and scripts that are available' (Day Sclater, 1998: 89) to interpret her transition from her past as 'a perfect mother' to her present acceptance of being 'a bad mother'.

Min-Hae's interpretation about her situation as a bad mother indicates her lack of power to change the environment surrounded by patriarchal family structure. This is also similar to Mi-Ya who had not seen her child since her divorce, though Min-Hae and Mi-Ya's situations are different in the sense Mi-Ya decided not to fight the custody of child³⁹. Mi-Ya's motive not to fight a child custody is related to her concern about being interconnected with her husband's family again. Mi-Ya explains why she had not seen her child since her divorce in 2000:

39. In my sample, there is one other woman who lost their children because she did not fight custody. Kyoung-Na told me if she has enough economic resources later on, she wants to live with her children.

I rang twice after drinking and asked 'Can I see the child?' He said 'No.' I really wanted to see my daughter, but I had to meet him and his family to see my child. It was so painful to meet them, and I really didn't want to see them. I think that when she grows up, she would come to see me. I think that it is my fate [Mi-Ya].

'Fate' is the only word Mi-Ya could use to describe her situation, which seemed beyond her control. 'Fate' is also the word that reveals the power relationship between her and her ex-husband: her fate is dependent on his 'Yes or No'. Yet, her 'fate' is also her 'wish'. Mi-Ya describes her 'fate' in the context of her 'wish' not to risk herself getting caught by her past relationship, a desire Park found in her research (Park Boo Jin, 1999). Park's study of 100 divorce suits brought between 1997 and 1998 in Korea found that approximately one-fifth of women did not want to get custody of their children. Their reasons are various: some women did not want to get custody of their children because they did not want to be connected with their ex-husbands or men's family clan through their children; other women could not afford raising their children on their own; or they wanted to remarry (Park Boo Jin, 1999: 112-3).

Women's stories about how they negotiate custody while still being good mothers and providing for their children's needs reveal that they attach different meanings to child custody than men do.

3.4 The Meanings Men Attach to Child Custody

Four men (Chul-Su, Sang-Chul, Hee-Tae and Gi-Chan) had their children living with them after divorce⁴⁰. Both women and men talked about their

40. Three men's mothers took care of men's children after divorce except for Chul-Su but Chul-Su's mother also cared for his children after divorce until she passed away.

affection for their children and expressed concerns about how divorce would affect them. In the case of the men, the main concern was that children need their mothers. The men believe that there is a mother/child bond and they assumed that this bond would prevent their ex-wives from divorcing them and that they would want to have custody of the children after divorce.

She told me that the only thing she was unhappy about was that she could not stay with the children, but she was not happy with me. I did not let her keep the children. [I told her] 'If you want to leave me, I cannot give you the children. You can leave alone. I do not have anything to give to you.' [She said] 'O.K.' [I said] 'If you go, you go alone.' [...] Even when we put the stamp on the divorce papers, I thought that she had a month⁴¹ to reconsider our relationship. I thought that she would not leave me because of our children. [I thought] Children were the bond of our relationship because she really loved our eldest daughter. [Chul-Su]

Chul-Su believed that his wife would not leave their children. He saw the close relationship between his wife and children as a sign that his wife might come back to him because of their children. Men regard motherhood as centred on children's needs and thus assume that women will sacrifice to save their marriages. Therefore, when women then refuse custody of their children, men interpret that as a clear signal that the marriage is over.

When the judge mediated, [the judge asked] 'Who wants to take care of your children', if she had answered that she wanted to take care of the children, I might have thought that I did not want to divorce as I might have thought that there was still 'hope' for her. If she could not abandon them, even though we did not have a good relationship, I would have tried again if she still wanted to have a relationship with the children. I tried to find some hope. When she refused it, I decided to

41. In Korea, when people who divorce in a family court do not register the divorce form at a registry office within a month, the initial divorce application becomes null and void.

divorce without hesitation [...]. I only felt betrayed at the time. [Hee-Tae]

Hee-Tae would thus have had hope for their marriage if his wife wanted to take care of their children. Both Chul-Su's and Hee-Tae's accounts stress how their understandings of heterosexual marital relationships centre on the 'natural' bond between mothers and children. Hee-Tae did not care about why his wife did not want to take care of their children and so did not explain the reason, he only focused on the moment that his ex-wife refused it. Both Chul-Su and Hee-Tae see their children's relationship with a mother as a reason to maintain their marriages regardless of the problems between them and their wives. When women then choose to divorce and to lose custody of their children, they are subjected to severe moral judgement, as emerges in Gi-Chan's narrative. Gi-Chan's divorce took four years because of his ex-wife's resistance. Gi-Chan went to court but failed to satisfy the legal requirement for proving that the breakdown of the marriage was his wife's fault. When he finally divorced, his wife did not want to have custody because she was planning to remarry. He told me that 'My wife did not even have any affection for my children. When she refused to have custody rights, all good memories about her just disappeared'.

Even though Gi-Chan told that he could not allow his ex-wife to take care of his children because his mother wanted the children to stay with their family, the fact that his ex-wife refused it linked with his deep anger towards his ex-wife. Sang-Chul also told me that his wife did not even like the child, emphasizing that his wife did not perform any marital duty well. Women and men express various emotions, such as anger, pain and disappointment, when they talk about their divorces. Women's emotions tend to focus on how they feel about their children and about their husbands' refusal to let them have custody while the men talked more about the emotions they experience when

their wives choose not to stay with their children.

Men who did not have child custody rights expressed their lack of participation in child care and their belief that it is better for children to stay with their mothers as their reasons for opting not to insist on having custody. Smart and Neale contend that, in 'the majority of heterosexual couples who follow traditional child-care arrangements, fatherhood still does not routinely provide an identity for a man [who does] not necessarily [have] an active, involved relationship with children' (1999: 118). Chang-Jin explains this as follows: 'I gave her the child because I thought it would be better for the mother to take care of her child. It does not mean that I abandoned the child'. Min-Su also told me that 'She loves the child so much. Even now, she does everything for him'.

Women's and men's sense that children belong with their mothers is influenced by cultural and social assumptions about motherhood. However, these assumptions are not necessarily reflected in child custody laws. Collier argues that legal and political processes are not couched 'in terms of formally gender neutral language'. Rather, there is an 'assumption that women and men themselves come before the law' (2001: 535). These legal and political realities also complicate women's negotiations of the division of property.

4. Dividing the Family Assets

Since 1990, women have had the right to claim a share of the family's property when they divorce.⁴² However, the reality is more complicated, as I will explore by analyzing women's accounts of their experiences. Among 17

42. The percentage of the property that women can receive varies. When the woman was a housewife she can get a maximum of 30% of the property and she can receive 50% when both partners worked (Byeon Hwa Soon, 2005).

women, 11 women did not gain property after divorce. Six of the women attributed this to the fact that there was no property to divide. Five out of 11 women who did not gain property expressed in a various contexts why they did not ask for it even though there was property to divide. Mi-Ya and Ji-Sue explain their reasons as follows:

When I went to work [during the process of divorce], my mother-in-law waited for me. She asked me to sign a paper to promise that I would give up all the money to my husband after we sold the house. [...] I only wanted to escape from the situation as soon as possible because I felt like dying at the time. I could earn money because I worked. So I signed it. [Mi-Ya]

Even from the beginning, I did not bother to try to get any money. I came out without any money from him. [Me: Why did you do that?] I just wanted to divorce. That's the normal Korean woman's story [pause]. Just ask for a divorce first and then ask for the children later. One doesn't ask for money. I said that I did not want anything because he did not want to divorce. I only asked for my child. Because he kept refusing to give me a divorce or to let me keep our child, how could I ask for more? [Ji-Sue]

Even though both partners worked during the marriage, two women did not claim any property because of their specific situations and reasons for seeking a divorce. Jo-An also did not get any property because the divorce was due to her adultery. Her ex-husband's sister interfered in the divorce process to prevent her from getting any of the property and she told me: 'I did not expect to get anything because I committed adultery'.

Women emphasize their circumstances when they explain why they did not receive any money. However, their financial marginalization is clearly related to their status in the marriage as well as to their desire to retain custody of their children and their reasons for divorcing rather than to their individual situations. Women also choose not to ask for property because they see divorce

as an escape route out of their painful marriages. They told me: 'I felt like dying' and 'I just wanted to divorce'. In Lee Yung Jin's (1999) telephone survey and face to face survey, 18.9% of the 151 male interviewees said that their wives received no property because they were responsible for the divorce while 13.2% said that they let their ex-wives have custody of the children instead of giving them part of the property. 40.6% of 156 women noted that they did not try to get property because their ex-husbands were unable to give them anything while 17.4% of the women said that they only wanted to divorce and were not particularly concerned about anything else. 3.3% of women stated that their ex-husbands did not want to give them any of the property (Lee Yung Jin, 1999). In another study, 10% of the women did not get any property because they chose to try to gain custody of the children (Byeon Hwa Soon, 2005).

In six cases women did receive part of the property after their divorces. However, the amounts they received were not legally determined. Rather, the women based their requests for money on the need to rent a house and to buy basic household items. In the case of one woman, the savings were divided in half because both partners worked. Min-Hae had to wait a year for the property to be divided because her husband put the house in another person's name in order to camouflage his assets and to prevent her from getting anything. This happened when she asked him for a divorce. In Korea, the partner in whose name the property is can sell it or transfer the property to another person's name without the other partner's consent. Since property tends to be in the man's name, many women thus face these kinds of problems when they want to request their share of the property.

Park Hea Kyung and her colleagues (Park Hea Kyung, et al., 2004) conducted a survey based on 1227 people in the In-cheon area. In most of these cases the property was in the man's name even though it is possible to have joint bank accounts, regardless of the fact that the woman or her parents often contributed more than the men did (see also, Byeon Hwa Soon, 2005; Lee Myoung Shin

and Kim Yu Soon, 2005). It is neither as acceptable nor as common for women to own property in Korea. Having the property in the man's name signifies trust in and commitment to the family. This contributes to women's financial problems after divorce. Sandfield contends that the social discourse which regards financial interdependence as 'marital trust' or a 'romanticized dependence upon marriage' produces women's economic difficulties within and after marriage. It also causes women to feel more afraid of divorce since the prevailing social norms render them 'ill-prepared for the financial consequences' (2006: 166). This is a fairly common situation in Korea owing to women's lack of rights to property in marriage. When the family property belongs to men, it is much easier for them to avoid having to divide the family assets when they divorce.

Five of my male interviewees divided their property. Two of these men were asked for money by their ex-wives' brothers as they needed money to prepare for their own marriages. In three of these men's cases the division of property did not involve any struggle. Min-Su offered the house to his wife so that she could stay there with their son and two of the men agreed to a division of the property after discussing it with their wives.

Eight men did not divide the family's property when they divorced. Four of these men did not have any property to divide but the other four refused to divide the property.

At first, when she kept asking for a divorce, I suggested that we have a mediation period but she did not want to do it. I promised to give her 20 million won (around 10.000 pounds) if we still wanted to divorce after taking some time. I wrote this in a memorandum. I wanted to give her the money because I wanted both of us to be able to live well after the divorce. [...] However, even though I wanted us to wait for about 8 months, she repeatedly refused. Because of this I did not give her anything. Why should I give her anything if she hated me that much?
[Myoung-Gi]

Myoung-Gi's narrative demonstrates that he initially regarded himself as being magnanimous enough to make the individual choice to give her some money. He never regarded the division of property as something that was her right. When he then becomes angry, he regards it as his right to withhold her share of the property. This was also the case with some of the other men I interviewed. Chul-Su did not divide their property because of his anger at his wife's adultery while Gi-Chan and Hee-Tae refused their wives' requests for a division of the property because they blamed them for their divorces. The process of dividing family assets is a good indicator of the economic difficulties that often confront women after divorce, which I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 8.

5. Summary

In this chapter, I mainly focused on how women's and men's account of divorce is shaped by the particular social, economic and political contexts within which they are situated and such social understandings connect divorce with disintegrating social and cultural norms. The difficulties women and men encounter during the process of divorce were expressed much more by women in relation to children and their birth family and also legal and cultural realities. This explains why conflicts in the divorce process can be seen as 'emblematic of broader social, cultural and economic shifts in relations of power between women and men' (Collier, 1999: 132). Especially, different social norms and judgements on women and men particularly causes deep struggles and pain when women have children. The meaning of a 'gender-neutral concept in law' masks women's and men's different social and cultural norms about 'masculinities and femininities and the practices of motherhood and fatherhood' (Day Sclater and Piper, 1999: 19; see also Fineman, 1995). Furthermore, women's different social position brings deep uncertainty about

their future in relation to family practices and lack of social support for the division of property. These different social situations are highlighted in women's and men's divergent narratives about life after divorce.

CHAPTER 8

THE GENDERED SELF AND POST-DIVORCE RELATIONSHIPS

1. Introduction

Divorce is often regarded as one of the most difficult crises in an individual's life course as it involves significant changes in terms of 'emotional and material investments' as well as the loss of social networks and identity (Orbuch, 1992: 193). Many analyses of individuals' post-divorce experiences consider changes in psychological stress levels and the ways in which people make adjustments in order to make better use of their individual resources (Booth and Amato, 1991; Kitson and Morgan, 1990). Studies of the psychological consequences of marital breakdown indicate that men are more likely than women to suffer from depression after a divorce (Dryden, 1999: 147). A great deal of research also focuses on the differences in men's and women's social and material realities after divorce, especially on women's economic hardship (Byeon Hwa Soon, 1996, 2005; Arendell, 1986) and changes in men's and women's social and kin networks (Gerstel, et al., 1985; Gerstel, 1988). However, there is little research on the different meanings that women and men attach to loss and change after divorce. The loss of a 'marital relationship' is certainly a stressful life event for both divorced men and women. Yet the experience of 'loss' is made sense of differently by men and women and linked to their gendered narratives of a 'new self'.

In this chapter, I will explore women's and men's experiences of loss and change, as well as the risks they face after divorce. While both divorced women and men talk about their struggles with loss, anger, sadness, low self-esteem, fear and loneliness (Day Sclater, 1999; Arendell, 1986), these

experiences are gendered. In some sense divorce is a private and personal issue. In another sense, however, it extends beyond the personal sphere, as experiences of financial, familial, custodial and new romantic and social relationships continue to be shaped by wider material and cultural reality (Fineman, 1995: 48).

2. Meanings of Loss and Change

The different meanings that women and men attach to loss as well as their different interpretations of post-divorce experiences are influenced by the gendered differences in their experiences of marital life. When women discuss the end of their marriages, they tend to focus on their submissiveness and powerlessness when they were married and they construct their marital lives as lacking a sense of individual existence (see chapter 6). Men, on the other hand, construct their marital problems in terms of their failures in individual pursuits and the shortcomings of their ex-wives (see chapter 5). This illustrates that ‘the meanings and implications of divorce differ according to the speaker gender’ as the nature of marriage varies according to gender (Sandfield, 2006: 158). In divorce, as in marriage, ‘gender [as] social identity... remains the central organizing principle’ (Arendell, 1986:157). Women and men go through different processes to recover from their pain and these social transitions require time in order to integrate new forms of social involvement and senses of personal integrity into the post-divorce reality (Levinger, 1992: 216).

3. Women: Post-Divorce Narratives

3.1 Loss and Change

Women construct loss as the regret they have about living lives in which they articulate their needs and in which they did not enjoy equality with their husbands. For them, divorce constitutes a journey from hopelessness to the

recovery of themselves. Women thus do not primarily see loss as the dissolution of their marriages. Rather, they focus on the loss of a sense of self while they remained in their marriages.

Women's narratives about their experiences of divorce reveal that they conceptualize divorce as a way to reclaim themselves. This raises crucial question about their views of marriage as such as well as about the beliefs that led them to remain in their marriages for as long as they did. The women note their opposition to the structures that resulted in their subordination in marriage. In the majority of women's accounts, divorce emerges as a sign of hope:

I learnt so many things through divorce. It is like being in a car and driving through a long, dark tunnel and then reaching the sunlight after the tunnel. I felt like I went through a long tunnel. [Jeong-Mi]

Jeong-Mi uses images of darkness and sunlight to explain her experience of divorce and she distances herself from the past by saying that she emerged on the other side of the tunnel. Women's narratives about their journey from their past to their present selves involve their answers to the question of who they were when they were married. Their loss of self in marriage and their new voices are constructed through a 'complex interrelation of past and present, here and there, self and other' and each women's story consists of 'the interwoven threads of her biography and her cultural experiences' (Day Sclater, 1998: 67). The distancing from the past and the reconstruction of their new lives begin when the women find themselves alone and have a chance to reflect back their past. For example, Ji-Sue's talk about the pressure to fulfill her expected role in marriage emphasizes that she lacked the 'chance to find out' what she wanted in her daily life.

When I lived with my husband, there was a role that I had to fulfill at

home. My husband put so much pressure on me to do things a certain way that I never had a chance to find out what I preferred. I already had a specific role according to which I was judged and I felt so frustrated when I could not fulfill that role well. Home was just the place where I was a mother and my husband and I were parents. There was not a specific relationship with my husband beyond that. [Ji-Sue]

Ji-Sue focuses on the loss of their sense of self in their marriages. The majority of the women experienced loss and regret because they felt isolated in their marriages. Women also discussed their regret that they did not know what they wanted and that their lives centered on their husbands and families. None of the women regretted their divorces but many had regrets about their lives while they were married. Women's experiences of unfairness in marriage and their loss of self are related to inequality and their lack of power in marriage. There is some irony in the fact that the more these women tried to fulfill their expected roles, the more isolated they felt and the more they lost their sense of self in marriage. Many of the women said that they experienced the most pain about and had the most difficulty in accepting the time they lost and the youth they squandered on their marriages. This was an especially painful issue for the women who were married for long periods. When the women discuss their anger about lost time, they often note that the views and beliefs that led them to get married were wrong:

If women realize that it [marital relationship] cannot be changed through their efforts, they will understand that it is better to make a decision as soon as possible. Marriage does not work through sacrifice. Never live like that. Sacrifices or efforts to make a better man are just arrogance. It is wrong for women to think they have to live just for their marriages; it is wrong because the partner never even knows what the woman sacrificed for them. Maybe, they [men] will come to know (an angry voice), but when? They might only realize it when the woman is in her 60s or 70s. What's the point [of realizing it then]? By that time my life would already be wasted and meaningless. The more time passes by, the more I feel that I want to live my own life as a human being. That is something I did not feel before. Anyhow, it is now most important to live for myself. Of course, that does not mean that I have

to live my life without considering other people. [Yun-Ja]

For a while, I shuddered to even think of [him] and was terribly angry with him. I felt so victimized. In the past, I was not the center of my life as I was only concerned about the family. After the divorce, I started to think about what I want to do. For the first time I thought about myself as the center of my life. [Na-Ri]

Women's anger about their loss of self is the central factor that leads them to seek out different forms of knowledge. Ahmed argues that 'anger already involves a reading of the world in a particular way' (Ahmed, 2004: 171). Holmes also indicates that women's anger often becomes the basis upon which women break or challenge 'the culturally valued passivity assumed as part of feminine demeanour' (2004: 215). Here, being angry is not simply about having 'feeling[s] of repulsion towards others' (Holmes, 2004: 213). For both Yun-Ja and Na-Ri, for example, being angry with their husbands are closely linked to their being angry with themselves – their 'living for others' in marriage – and this feeling becomes the basis upon which they build the meaning of 'living for themselves' as divorced women.

Bartky (1990) contends that women's understanding of victimhood can become the basis of 'resistance, wariness and suspicion' about the world they belong to (Bartky, 1990: 21). It also raises questions about their images of themselves and about the depreciation of their personal worth (Bartky, 1990: 21). Women's comments about not knowing what they wanted or who they were in marriage indicate that they have to embark on various projects to find out who they are once they find themselves alone. Once they leave their marriages and are alone, women very quickly experience a need to control their time.

3.2 Time and Change

Women's sense that they did not know who they were reflects the extent to which their lives revolved around their families and their caring responsibilities while they were married (Vaughan, 1987: 126). Women's emphasis on controlling their time is a result of their changing identities. Having control over their own time is a crucial part of finding out what they want through the lengthy process of constructing their new selves (Sandfield, 2006). Since women disconnect from their past identities during this process, they often feel that they have lost a sense of belonging to a group, as Soo-Yun's narrative illustrates:

When I divorced, it was really...how can I put it? Before the divorce, I had a certain group to which I belonged but after the divorce I felt really isolated. [Pause] I became a minority. Suddenly [a loud voice] I felt as if I had fallen into my life from somewhere else. [Soo-Yun]

Soo-Yun's experience of being a minority contributes to her need to reconstruct her identity and sense of self after her divorce. Women need to find ways to change their daily lives from being family centered to being self centered, regardless of whether they keep custody of their children.

It is crucial to control one's time and behaviour because it is easy to meet the wrong people and this could ruin one's life. I used to immerse myself obsessively in my family. I did not even listen to music. After divorce, I worked so hard to escape from that life. I have travelled throughout the country for two years. Now when I have time, I meet new people. It is really important to meet good people. [Yun-Ja]

Divorce changed a lot of things in my life. It is all up to me to make my experiences positive or negative. The way in which I deal with things can affect my entire future. [...] This is really important. [Na-Ri]

The process of creating new lives is also influenced by women's fear that they could ruin their lives by not exercising proper control. Both Na-Ri and Yun-Ja noted that it was crucial for them to control their lives after divorce.

Women's emphasis on controlling their time and their lives is part of their attempt to find meaning in their post-divorce realities. Many women talked about becoming involved in different activities, such as going abroad to study, joining meditation courses and going into counseling. Min-Hae engaged in a similar process after her divorce:

At first [after the divorce], I found the weekends terribly hard. Weekends used to be so busy with so many things [for my family] and I used to be very tired with managing it all. Suddenly, I felt like dying because no one came near me. It went on like this for 6 months. I enrolled for a Masters course in the evenings, worked and joined a counseling organization. For three years, I filled up my timetable.
[Min-Hae]

McKie and the colleagues (McKie, et al., 2002: 907) argues for the need to explore the gendered 'multi-dimensionality of time and space' in the context of 'the gendered basis of temporal and spatial frameworks'. Women's daily activities revolved around family members and children, which reflects that time does not have gender neutral meanings for women and men (McKie, et al., 2002: 910). While many women talked about their different time management strategies after divorce, none of the men mentioned that they found it difficult to manage their daily schedules after divorce. These different experiences of marriage meant that women had a greater sense of gaining freedom through divorce and they focused on the new identities they could create for themselves.

3.3 A Sense of Freedom

According to Riessman, the majority of women regard being freed from their subordinated status as wives as a positive aspect of divorce (Riessman, 1990: 164-165, 184). Colburn and the colleagues also finds that women's narratives emphasize the experience of independence as 'the basis for a new identity' (Colburn, et al., 1992: 105).

The women I interviewed regarded their new freedom as a similarly crucial issue. They see the fact that they finally managed to obtain a divorce as a sign of their newfound freedom.

It [divorce] gave me a very positive image of myself. Do you know why? Not everyone can divorce. No one could have lived the way I did for three years. I survived a situation that could have killed me or could have driven me crazy [...] It makes me very proud and confident to know that I managed to survive. [...] During my marriage, I did not harm anyone, not even him [her ex-husband]. I held on without telling anyone about my difficulties. [...] I survived rock bottom and now I am no longer afraid of anything [...] I hear about many women whose situations are similar to mine, but most of them stay in their marriages. They rarely divorce. [Mi-Ya]

Most of all, I am free. I felt that I could fly. I finally managed to get a divorce after eight years of suffering. [Young-Hee]

Mi-Ya's and Young-Hee's narratives about rebuilding their lives and their self-esteem are constructed in terms of binary opposites. They describe themselves as victims of loss and pain during their marriages and as survivors after their divorces. The term survivor is used to claim a new identity. Day Sclater (1998) argues that women use the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' to explain their journeys from their past selves to their newly constructed identities. Putting themselves first is a crucial step in this journey of rebuilding their lives after

divorce.

It is not good to break up a marriage. However, if I stayed with him, I might have lost all my 'gi' (energy). I would have continued thinking that there was nothing more to life than him. [...] If I had stayed, I would have felt so suffocated. It is a little bit strange to say that I learned something through my divorce but I did learn that there are so many diverse worlds. I have met good friends. I have also experienced things I never had [in marriage]. [So-Ra]

It is so nice to concentrate [on my own life] and to live the way I want to. When I want something, I can make my own plans to get it. It makes me happy to control my life myself. If my plans turn out to be wrong I can accept it because it was my choice and my fault. I have had to accept that I need to be clear about what I want. I used to feel like I was stuck in a labyrinth. [Sue-Mi]

Things were good and I felt very comfortable. [...] I worked hard and got much better results in my work. I only focused on my work. [Su-Ji]

Perseverance is so important. I now have to stand on my own two feet and figure my future out alone. I learned that if I don't have the perseverance to find ways out of difficulties, I won't get what I want. People I know now think that I am so independent and admirable. [Kyoung-Na]

Western studies also note that women's experience of divorce includes improving their self, revealing differences from men's. Wadsby and Svedin (1992) found that most of the women in their study (72%) felt that their mental and emotional well-being improved after divorce while only 18% of them felt worse-off mentally. In the case of men, however, 28% reported that their mental state of health improved while 45% said that it deteriorated. Divorce also had a very different impact on the self-confidence of men and women as 84% of women felt more confident while only 37% of men noted an improvement in their confidence levels after divorce. It emerged that the

person who initiated the divorce experienced the greatest improvements in their mental and psychological states. Women found greater satisfaction in their social lives and they benefited from enhanced self-confidence after their divorces. This improvement in self-confidence could be attributed to the women's newly found opportunities to exercise control over their own lives (Wadsby and Svedin, 1992: 458). These women seem to focus on finding out who they are as a way to resist male dominance in marriage (Hackstaff, 1999).

Women's narratives about their different experiences reveal important commonalities that need to be addressed. They explore their new freedom after divorce by spending time with friends, doing voluntary work and making their own decisions about how they want to spend their time. These experiences of building their own lives through various daily activities imply that the dominant discourses and power relationships that kept them subordinated in marriage are not immutable. While women restructured their lives by seeking new identities that challenged the inequality they experienced in marriage, men dealt with their pain and loss in different ways. In particular, none of the men talked about losing their sense of self while they were married.

4. Men: Post-Divorce Narratives

4.1 Loss and Change

According to Baum (2003), too little research has been done on the differences between divorced men's and women's processes of mourning and that men are more likely to engage in risky behaviour after divorce while women take risks earlier by initiating divorce. Men also tend to deny the emotional impact that divorce has on them and they mourn the loss of their children, home and family rather than the loss of their wives (Baum, 2003: 39). In my sample, it is clear that men consider the loss of their families as the main source of anger and regret. However, men also, in a sense, mourn the loss of their wives: they do not necessarily mourn the loss of their 'actual' wives, but rather, the loss of

an ideal wife who could keep the family intact and could make a home where the man could have a sense of belonging.

The rewriting of the self after divorce reflects men's and women's adjustments to loss. Men and women try to make sense of their divorces in order to adjust to their post-divorce reality and to ensure their 'survival' (Day Sclater, 1999). Men tend to go about this process by focusing on the obstacles that prevented them from having the ideal marriage and by trying to understand the causes of the problems in their relationships. The ways in which men experience and describe their sense of loss, anger, betrayal and regret are embedded in masculine understandings of marriage and relationships. Men's narratives do not question marriage as an institution and they continue to regard the maintenance of the home as women's responsibility.

4.2 The Loss of the Ideal Family

Men's understandings of the ideal marriage and their belief that divorce results in 'a broken family' (Arendell, 1995) shape their sense of loss after a divorce. Men's rewriting of the self is thus based on their memories of the difficulties that prevented them from having an ideal marriage. Such memories are recounted in three different ways. Men who initiated their divorce (Hyun-Gil, Hee-Tae, Gi-Chan and Sang-Chul) recounted that their divorce was caused by their choice of 'a bad wife'. Men who did not initiate the divorce and who considered that they fulfilled the 'husband' role for their wives (Myoung-Gi, Chul-Su, Kee-Jae) said that they did not know why they had to divorce. A third group (Hong-Sye, Chang-Jin, Tae-Soo, Han-II) who admitted their faults expressed their disappointments over their wives who did not give them a second chance. Only two men (Min-Su and Joo-Min) did not express the loss of the ideal family⁴³.

43. As a result of divorce, they changed their view of marital relationships as I will

Men who initiated their divorces were most likely to point to their choice of partner as a mistake they had made.

I do not want to go back to the past. I regret it. I regret marrying such a person. If I had met another woman, I would not have had this experience [divorce]. If I could go back, I would like to go back to the period before I met her. [Hyun-Gil]

I have no good memories [of her]. It was a waste of time from which I gained nothing. [...] Why did I marry her and spend all that time in vain? [...] My children were already ten years old. I could have lived a better life if I had not married her. I am not even forty yet. I sometimes think what it would be like if I could go back [before marriage]. But I feel so sad and empty when I think about it. I just prefer not to think about it. [Hee-Tae]

Hyun-Gil and Hee-Tae regret the time they lost because of the mistake they made in marrying their ex-wives. Their marriages were the opposite of 'the marital lives' they expected to have. Their narratives are not about a loss of self but are constructed around their partners who they see as having caused their pain and as having failed to fulfil their duty to provide a safe and comfortable home. Men's narratives about the loss of their families are thus connected to their loss of the wives who should have provided the homes they wanted. When I asked men whether they were happy after getting a divorce, they stress that they did not have a home even while they were married because their ex-wives had failed to provide a 'real home' by constantly nagging and arguing. Men, particularly those who initiated divorce, thus see divorce as a way to obtain the home they felt they lacked while they were married.

I am so happy [after the divorce]. Since I've been divorced, I come home early. When I was married someone was always angry with me

explain later.

and I was always being told off. I was so irritated with her. At the beginning, I frowned and sometimes I tried to smile but eventually I did not even want to see her face. [Gi-Chan]

Gi-Chan partly ascribes his post-divorce happiness to the fact that he no longer needs to listen to his wife's 'nagging'. He connects her nagging to not coming home early while he was married. This reflects his sense of gaining a home and space by getting a divorce. Hee-Tae also told me that he was much more comfortable at home since there were no more arguments after the divorce:

Hee-Tae: I am so comfortable now. There is nothing else that I want. Because I had such difficulties in my marriage, things are so much easier now. I am happy that there are no more arguments.

SN: *What kind of relationship did you want from your marriage?*

Hee-Tae: I wanted some kind of comfort from my wife. I wanted to make a happy home for my children and I wanted a happy life with my wife. I should have been able to have such a life in reality because it is what all normal people dream of having. However, it remained a dream rather than a reality. [Hee-Tae]

These men conceptualize happiness as being in a situation that is different from the past but they do not necessarily believe that they need to construct different selves in order to be happy. They may lose the ideal marital relationship that they thought they would have, but they believe that they can gain happiness by walking away from the marital ideal that eluded them.

Men who were reluctant to divorce and thought they had been good family providers went through particularly long struggles to understand why their marriages ended in divorce.

I gave up working for two months [after the divorce]. [I thought] why was I trying to save money and why was I working so hard. I spent a lot of money, buying beef every day [after the divorce]. [...] When I

started working, I devoted all my time to work. Now I save lots of money. I won't be able to spend it all in my lifetime. In the past, I had a kind of dream that I was living for my family. My friends who are not rich live much better than me because they have a family and children. [I ask myself] 'For what have I lived? Where is the family that I considered above all else and to which I devoted my life?' I don't have anything. People are the most important thing. Where are they? I don't have a wife and children. I don't have anyone. [Myoung-Gi]

Myoung-Gi links his loss and pain to the loss of his family. He also lost the dream he had for his family life. Most of the men who did not initiate their divorces and who did not, in their own view, have any obvious fault that caused the breakdown of their marriages primarily struggled with a feeling of betrayal. There are not many socially acceptable narratives for explaining why a marriage ended when the husband worked and adequately met the financial needs of his family. This lack of socially acceptable and easily accessible explanations helps one understand the ambiguity in the men's narratives. For example, when asked about the reasons for their divorces, Chul-Su said 'I don't know' [the reason] and Kee-Jae also told me that his was an 'impulse divorce' for which there was no clear reason.

Day Sclater argues that the ways in which men and women cope with psychological pain intersect in complex ways with 'existing social discourses and structures, and real material constraints' and that these are also gendered processes (Day Sclater, 1999: 175). Men's interpretation of their divorces is thus structured according to masculine meanings of divorce. Myoung-Gi, for instance, told me that he read sex magazines to try and figure out what went wrong with his marriage and to find socially understandable ways of explaining his divorce. While women lose confidence because of marriage, and they see divorce as the way of resolving a lack of confidence, men see divorce as causing a lack of confidence because they believe that their marriages ended in 'broken families' and they try to rebuild their confidence through other social activities. Chul-Su's comments are in response to my

question, 'Is there anything that you have changed after your divorce?'

Chul-Su: Because I felt lonely I started trying to meet people. I belong to six groups.

SN: *What kinds of groups did you join?*

Chul-Su: They are groups for social activities. [...] I joined because I felt so ashamed. I want to show that I am not a failure and I want to be regarded as a successful man. I want to be confident in front of people.

Chul-Su joined social groups in order to gain a sense of validation and to rebuild his confidence because he needs to be seen as successful by other people. Colburn and the colleagues contends that 'males can be predicted to seek external sources for the validation of self necessitated by the marital breakup' (Colburn, et al., 1992: 101). Men's need to rebuild their public self-confidence is clearly related to their understanding of divorce as a failure of the family. The ways in which women and men interpret their pasts reflect the extent to which 'divorce exposes the taken-for-granted nature of gender relationships' in heterosexual relationships (Smart and Neale, 1999: 118), particularly of the different gendered responsibilities in marriage. In men's use of language the term 'family' is not neutral. Rather, as Gubrium and Holstein (1990) assert, the family is socially constructed. For women, the family has connotations of powerlessness and unfairness while men are less embroiled in the daily 'doing of family' and they are thus more able to understand 'family' from the vantage point of their identities outside the home.

Men who do not think that they took sufficient responsibility as family providers emphasize the specific circumstances that resulted in their divorces. In Amato and Rogers' 1997 study, more men than women admitted that they had some responsibility for the failure of their marriages (Amato and Rogers, 1997; see also Kitson and Holmes, 1992: 129). However, when men talk about being sorry for how they treated their wives, one needs to consider

exactly what they are sorry about. When men discuss their regrets they tend to express the belief that, if they had done better, their relationships would not have ended up in divorce. They also note that, if they and their wives could have managed to recover from the difficult times, the marital problems could have been resolved and they could have had 'the ideal family'.

SN: How did you feel when you got divorced?

Chang-Jin: Oh, I just felt that I was sorry for her because I did not do well. My feelings for her might never change, even if I were to live with another woman, because she is the person who delivered my lovely child. [...] To have a family is the happiest thing. I know I could have been a better person. If they [his wife and his mother-in-law] had accepted my suggestions and had excused me I could have lived 'a normal family life' like my friends. [...] Now, of course, everything is my fault, but at the time I did not know what I had done that was so wrong. [Chang-Jin]

SN: What do you want now?

Hong-Sye: Now [pause]. The main thing I want is to live together again. I want to have a chance. I have not done anything [in marriage]. One thing I want from her is that she should have endured some more. [...] Even though she endured for ten years, I had not tried except for studying. I could do other things well. I regret that she did not wait for it. As for me, I want to love her until the end. I feel sorry for her that the relationship had to end like this. [Hong-Sye]

Chang-Jin and Hong-Sye understand their marital problems in terms of specific circumstances in which they failed their ex-wives. Men regret that their ex-wives did not support them enough and that they did not stay in the marriage until the husbands could attain success. Whilst women often understand their marital problems by questioning marriage itself, men focus on the specific problems that caused the marital difficulties rather than questioning marriage itself.

Men are more negative about divorce than women and men see divorce as a

failure or as a loss of their ideal home. While the new roles and opportunities that are available to women after divorce often improve their self-esteem, there is significant evidence that marital breakdown can have a very negative psychological impact on men and that it is much more closely linked with depression and psychological problems in men than in women (Dryden, 1999: 147). Riessman also states that the majority of men see divorce as a failure and that they have negative ideas about divorce because they were unable to succeed in marriage (1990: 183). Men also talk about having lower self-esteem after divorce (Diedrick, 1991). My sample revealed similar findings. However, many men also expressed the desire to have more time with their future families and to have better intimate relationships with their future partners. As in Riessman's study (1990: 205), they emphasized their wish for a 'relational' or 'connected life with their wives'. They continue to locate these wishes and desires in their version of an ideal family and they base their hopes for future relationships on finding the ideal marital partner.

5. New Relationship and Remarriage

Cherlin (1992) notes that most divorced persons remarry (about two-thirds of the women and three-fourths of the men) and that cohabitation and remarriage after divorce have become common in America. These changing family forms can also be found in Korea even though the change has not been as rapid as it has been in the West. In 2000, the rate of remarriage of one or both partners was 18% (Korea National Statistical Office, 2001). According to Sye Moon Hee's research, women are more likely to remarry when they do not have economic resources and when they are still young and do not have children (1994). In Chang and Min's research, 50% of divorced people wanted to remarry for various reasons, including having a better life and a proper family, having security in their old age and because they met a new lover with whom they believed they could be happy (Chang Hye Kyung and Min Ga Young, 2002). In Ok Sun Hwa and the colleagues' research (1998), more than

70% of respondents among 716, aged between 10 to 70, agreed that it was better for divorced people to remarry if they have children. People were more likely to agree that men with children should remarry because they thought that children need a mother (see also, Chun Hae Kyoung and Choi Hyu Kyoung, 2001).

Here, I explore the ways in which women and men interpret the meaning of new relationships as well as how their interpretation of new relationships is influenced by their understanding of the loss resulting from their divorces. Women's understanding of the loss of self in marriage and men's understanding of divorce as resulting from the failure to find the ideal woman shape the ways in which they approach new relationships. I will start by discussing men's accounts of forming new relationships and then move onto women's accounts.

Table 11. Interviewees' current relationships

	Year of remarriage or cohabitation	Time between divorce and remarriage or cohabitation (years)
Mi-Ran (F)	2005 marriage	4
Mi-Ya (F)	2004 marriage	3
Soo-Yun (F)	2005 marriage	1
Jo-An (F)	2001 marriage	3
Jeong-Mi (F)	2004 marriage	More than one year
Ji-Sue (F)	2003 cohabitation	7
Su-Ji (F)	2004 marriage	3
Han-Il (M)	1998 marriage	4
Joo-Min (M)	2004 cohabitation	1

5.1 Men's Narratives About New Relationships

Changing perspectives on marriage did not feature strongly in most of my male interviewees' narratives about new relationships. Only two men talked about how their ideas about marriage and relationships had changed. Min-Su

explained this as follows:

I don't like obligations. Maybe my ex-wife was right when she told me 'You are not the kind of person who should be married'. She was right because I did not accept that I was married. [...] I did things the way I wanted rather than acting like a husband or fulfilling my role as a husband. I don't want to marry again. [Min-Su]

Min-Su told me that he did not want to marry again. However, Min-Su's reason for not wanting to get married again, even though he is currently dating a woman, is different from that of many women. He emphasised that he is not the kind of person who can fulfil the 'husband' role. Yet this did not mean that he experienced the loss of self in marriage in the same way many women experienced. He rather expressed that he wanted to continue 'being himself' – being the way he was in marriage. By contrast, Joo-Min told me that he now 'sees the relationship differently'

Men normally think that a couple can only express their love through sex. I can now feel closer to my wife even by just looking at her. I used to think that she would not love me so much or that she would lose affection for me if we did not have enough sex. When she did not want sex I worried that she was unsatisfied with our sex life. [...] I now see things differently. The way we think about our relationship and the things we believe in can be much more fun than having sex. [Joo-Min]

Aside from these two men, the men in my sample constructed narratives about their actual or desired relationships according to the same beliefs about the ideal woman that shaped their stories about their marriages. Since men see their loss primarily in terms of the loss of the ideal family rather than questioning the institution of marriage, they seek to meet the ideal woman to form their new relationships so that they can reconstruct their broken families

and recover from the losses they suffered. As Han-II told me:

As a way of escape from my past, I married again. She was modest and gentle. She didn't put on any make-up. She was not obsessive with money and brought up in a good home by good parents. I liked those things about her. She provided me the comfort I craved. [Han-II]

Han-II tells us how he resolved his problematic past (divorce) by marrying a woman he found comfort with. Even though Han-II is the only man who remarried, the similar picture of remarriage appears in other men's accounts of considering remarriage.

When men retain custody of children, they experience considerable pressure from their parents because of the prevailing belief that children need mothers and that this constitutes a family. This reflects how parenthood is still conceptualized in terms of different understandings of the roles of mothers and fathers, both in marriage and after divorce (Smart and Neale, 1999: 55). Men's perception of divorce as breaking up the family and their consequent desire to have a family again emerge in their explanations of why they want to remarry. However, the wish to retain custody of their children and worries about the possible break-up of a future family cause men to be hesitant about remarrying, even though they are not opposed to marriage and they want to form a new family with a 'good' woman.

I cannot rush into remarrying. If I fail again, it will be the end of my life. It will be the end for my children as well. It is obvious. I cannot hurt my children like that twice. If a new person treats my children well and is like a mother to them, it would be all right. If not, it will hurt my children a lot. [Chul-Su]

When I really meet someone who is a good woman with whom I would like to live and with whom I can feel comfortable, I would make a family again but not because my children need a mother. [...] My

mother and my family want to see me live a happy life. [...] If I marry because of that and end up in the same situation again, it will not only affect me but it will hurt my children and the rest of my family. Therefore, I should be very careful. [Hee-Tae]

Both Chul-Su and Hee-Tae talk about the ideal woman in the same way as when they chose a partner for their first marriages. In other words, they emphasize that they want a woman who will be a good mother and who will have a good relationship with their other family members. However, they are aware that a new marriage will not be easy. This awareness is particularly pronounced with men who retain custody of their children. For this reason, some men are prepared to live alone with their children when the children's grandmothers are unable to take care of them. Two men, Chul-Su and Gi-Chan, noted that they could best help their children by meeting their economic needs so that children could fulfill their dreams. Hee-Tae emphasized that he wanted his children to have a different kind of education and that he wanted them to live in the countryside when his mother could no longer take care of them:

My main consideration is my children. Even though they do not express their feelings now, I know that they were hurt. There is a big empty space where their mother used to be. I wonder how I can make up the loss of a mother to my children. I don't know how to compensate them for their loss yet, but I want my children to experience more freedom and comfort in the countryside. [Hee-Tae]

Men's concern for their children leads them to consider many possibilities. They think about better education, traveling and ensuring different life experiences for their children. However, they do not question their own ideals about marriage. Their hesitation about remarrying is related to their concern for their children. Men tend not to be opposed to marriage and when they do not have custody of their children, they are more positive about marrying again

and about meeting the ideal woman.

Three men (Chang-Gin, Myoung-Gi and Hyun-Gil) who did not retain custody of their children noted that they wanted to meet a woman who had not been married before. For example, Chang-Jin told that he prefers a woman who is not divorced when I asked what kind of woman he wanted to meet:

Chang-Jin: Such a woman might not have had much experience and would be more fun. A person with experiences like mine might be more concerned about a lot of things.

SN: You told me that you learnt many things through the experience [of divorce].

Chang-Jin: Yes, I did. However, that was my experience. If both people have been hurt, it will be more difficult to get over the pain even if I make an effort to get better. I am not God and if I make a mistake, she might think that I was like him [her ex-husband]. But if the person does not know anything [she] will think that life with me is what it is supposed to be like and she will adjust to my world. HaHaHa. [Chang-Jin]

I had similar conversation with Myoung-Gi:

Myoung-Gi: If it was possible I wanted to marry a woman who was not divorced.

SN: You told me that you have learned a lot.

Myoung-Gi: Yes. But how many people learn from the experience like I did? [...] I have met many people but most of the women were divorced and were the youngest child in their families. The divorced women that I have met did not have good or gentle characters.

SN: What do you mean when you say they were not gentle?

Myoung-Gi: It is hard to explain, but after meeting them a few times, I could feel it. People can remarry, of course. But they can also divorce again. I am still biased against divorced people. [...] Our parents' generation made every effort to fulfil their responsibilities at home and to ensure that their children succeeded. Now, people have an attitude of 'I am great'. People who have failed once will often fail continuously.

Both Chang-Jin and Myoung-Gi want to meet a woman who has not been married before. Even though they feel that they have learned from the experience of divorce, they do not believe that divorced women would have learned similar lessons. Unlike their image of themselves, they view divorced women as having failed at heterosexual marriage. They believe that divorced women have characters that are unsuitable for marriage. Reynolds and Wetherell argue that singleness, including divorced women, is not just '*socially constructed as a social category*, but also as a *discourse*' (2003: 493, italics in original). The discourse of singleness is also gendered and it produces the ideal heterosexual woman according to men's narratives. Men's emphasis on maintaining their own worlds and their desire to meet women who do not know any other kind of life than the one they offer, reflect the extent to which men equate women's independence with their own loss of power. Even though Hong-Sye did not mention his wish to meet a woman who is not divorced, he similarly told that his ideal woman is a person to depend on him and has a good character.

Men thus see women's insistence on having their own voice as incompatible with having a proper or ideal family. Men's narratives about their desire to meet a woman who has not been married emphasize how they continue to see marriage in terms of ideal heterosexual femininity and masculinity. These ideals include female submissiveness as an essential ingredient of men's ideal family. While men try to recover from their loss by regaining a 'proper' family, women focus on the new kinds of knowledge they gain through divorce and on their resistance to conventional marital life.

5.2 Women's Narratives about New Relationships

Women's narratives about new relationships focused on the new knowledge that they gained through divorce. Their experience of divorce thus becomes a crucial part of their revised understandings of marriage. As Llewelyn and

Osborne argue, the social view that divorced women are more 'threatening and dangerous' than divorced men and that women desperately look for their next partner (Llewelyn and Osborne, 1990: 196) differ significantly from women's post-divorce realities.

Six of my 17 female interviews remarried. One of the women married a foreigner and had another child with him. All the women who remarried noted that they were not opposed to getting married again but they explained that their criteria for choosing a husband were different when they remarried. Most of women who remarried emphasized how their second marriages took place in different contexts than their earlier marriages. For example, they stressed that they now had more 'knowledge' and that they were better equipped to choose the 'right marital partner'.

I did not feel that I did not want to get married again. However, I thought I could now find a good partner because [talking to herself] 'now I have 'eyes' to know about men'. I thought that I wanted to use this experience to get to know a man better. [Su-Ji]

Su-Ji uses the term 'eyes' to explain that she now has more knowledge that she can use to choose a suitable partner. She believes that she has found her own individual voice and that she can now make her own decisions about a partner which will bring about a different result than relying on her mother's knowledge and suggestions about a partner: 'I thought that because my mother made all the decisions, my marriage broke up. I did not know enough about marriage'.

Women see their adherence to dominant social and cultural views about ideal marital partners as leading to the failure of their marriages. Divorce gives them an opportunity to find an ideal partner for themselves.

The clearest thing I felt was that, no matter how good a man's resources for marriage are, the partners should at least have similar things in common. If they don't have anything they can share, a marriage can become stale. I tell people, 'If you do not think that he is the person you really want to marry, do not marry because of his social resources or because of your age'. This is what I really want to suggest to people who are considering marriage. [Jo-An]

Like Jo-An, other women mentioned the importance of sharing interests with the men they chose as their new partners. Women's accounts of their decision to remarry reveal that they did not remarry because they felt pressurized to do so. Rather, their new marriages result from the choices they make according to their revised understandings of what a suitable partner should be.

Since middle school, I have dreamed of love and marriage. I had met my ex-husband on many occasions because of my mother's match-making. I wanted to marry well. I even left my boyfriend to marry him [ex-husband]. Things still ended up like this. I felt so empty. [...] I thought that I had to unconditionally follow everything that my parents told me. When I divorced, I was so angry with them [her parents]. I realized that I could live my life the way I wanted to. Living the way I choose does not harm anyone else. [...] Now, when I want to do something, my mother and father cannot determine my decisions like they did then. This marriage [remarriage] was like that. [Mi-Ran]

Mi-Ran talked about how her view of her parents changed. The loss of the dreams she had at school is linked to changed ideas about the ideal feminine character and the ideal wife. She told me: 'When I remarried, I told him that I could not do things the way his mother did them. I am not that kind of woman. I cannot manage both my work and home well. I told him frankly how I felt'. When women form new relationships, they thus base them on new understandings of what the ideal woman should be. Min-Hae also told me: 'I thought that I should not argue in a marriage but now I know that it can be necessary to argue. The main thing is how we resolve things after having an

argument'.

Women's reflexive interpretations of the unfairness of their past relationships lead to different understandings of what an ideal marriage should be. Even though one woman, Soo-Yun, also said that her age contributed to her decision to remarry, most of the women noted that they remarried because of their individual choices and that they were cautious because they did not want to lose themselves in marriage again.

Women's experiences of losing their individual voices and their desire for real intimacy in a relationship cause them to insist on making their own decisions about remarriage. Yet, when women remarry, they are often not in the same situation in terms of the influence that their families can have on their choice of partner. None of the female interviewees said that their parents exerted pressure on them when they remarried although some of the men did experience parental pressure. This could be ascribed to the deep seated shame that parents feel about a daughter's divorce. Only Su-Ji's mother actively supported her remarriage and she felt that divorce should not prevent her daughter from forming a new relationship. Jang Jeong Soon (1994) also found some changes in the attitudes of parents of younger generations as they were more positive about their daughters' divorces and remarriages than parents of older generations. However, women still tend to be less inclined than men to be open about their remarriages as most of the women I interviewed did not send out wedding invitations when they got remarried. Of the six female interviewees who remarried, only the one who married a foreigner sent out wedding invitations.

SN: Did you send out wedding invitations?

Soo-Yun: I didn't, but he [her present husband] did. His parents did not know about my divorce when we got married. But my parents knew that he was also a divorcee. No relatives came when I got remarried. Nobody from my side of the family knew about it because my parents were so ashamed. [Soo-Yun]

Men, on the other hand, tended to go about their second marriages in much the same way as when they got married for the first time. Soo-Yun hid her divorce even though her husband had also been married before. Two women (Su-Ji and Mi-Ya) talked about the struggles they had with their parents-in-law because they were divorcees. These struggles are clearly related to the patriarchal family system in Korea as is very clear in Su-Ji's account:

Su-Ji: My husband told [his mother] about my divorce. It might have been better if only my husband knew about it. He told her one week before our wedding.

SN: *What happened then?*

Su-Ji: My mother-in-law (pause) told me: 'Why did I have to hear about it? It would have been better if I didn't know'. She told me off. She eventually accepted the marriage. However, if my father-in-law had known about it, there would have been big trouble. Huge trouble [sigh]

SN: *Why do you think that?*

Su-Ji: My father-in-law is very determined and stubborn. How could he accept a woman who belonged to another man's family in his own family? [Su-Ji]

Regardless of the circumstances in which the women remarried, the different ideas and beliefs that they developed after their divorces thus provided them with opportunities to lead different kinds of lives. Their revised views of marriage also emerge when they discuss the struggles they went through when deciding whether to get married again or not.

5.3 Having Freedom or Facing Economic Risk

Three women (Han-Na, Yun-Ja and So-Ra) said that they found it difficult to decide whether to remarry or not because they were worried about their

economic future when their children were older. A great deal of research has found that women's economic situation is a major issue after divorce (Chang Hye Kyung and Min Ga Young, 2002; Byeon Hwa Soon 2005; Arendell, 1986; Kurz, 1995).⁴⁴ In my sample, 11 women revealed economic problems after divorce. None of them remarried. The 6 women who did not talk about their economic problems had all remarried by the time I interviewed them. The women who discussed their economic difficulties did not receive any property when they got divorced.

The lack of social and legal structures to ensure that men contribute to the expenses of raising children also brings about significant economic problems for women who retain custody of their children after divorce. In Korean law, there is no legal mechanism to hold men accountable when they do not keep up with their monthly child maintenance payments. It is a matter of individual responsibility and it becomes individual women's problem if men do not pay (Park Kyoung Ja, 2004). In a survey conducted by the 'Korean Legal Aid Center for Family Relationships', it emerged that the majority of women did not receive child maintenance payments (Park Kyoung Ja, 2004). In the case of women who retain custody of their children, 87.1% of the women reported that the main problem was the cost of children's education. Chang Hye Kyung and Min Ga Young found that as a result of these economic difficulties, 33.9% of women said that they had considered giving up custody of their children (Chang Hye Kyung and Min Ga Young, 2002). Another study also found that among divorced single mothers with dependent children, 35.4% of the mothers are living in extreme poverty (Byeon Hwa Soon, et al., 2006).

44. Women's economic problems are related to the social environment that makes it difficult for women to find proper jobs in Korea. In 2004, men had 70.8% of all regular jobs. Almost 70% of women who did have a job were working irregular hours. Women who have regular jobs receive only 79% of the salary that men get for regular jobs. Women who work irregular hours, receive 43% of the pay that men get. The likelihood that women will have irregular jobs increases to 80% when women are over 40 (Hankyoreh Newspaper, 2005).

In my sample, only one woman had been receiving regular support since her divorce. Three women were receiving no support at the time of the interview while two women got only irregular support. These two women said that they found the process of getting the money very painful and it involved a great deal of emotional work to remind their ex-husbands repeatedly that they needed money for their children.

He should give it [money for the child's expenses] without being asked for it. If I ask him for it, he says 'O.K.' He just forgets and he is not sincere about it. I need to mention it all the time. He says 'I am busy with many other things. Tell me when you need money'. That's it. It drives me crazy to have to ask over and over. I really hate having to bring it up all the time. [She thinks to herself] He is worth next to nothing. It is better to forget the money. [Young-Hee]

In some women's cases, their lack of income and the difficult process of trying to get child maintenance payments contribute to considering remarriage to ensure their financial future.

When I think about it I realise how unstable my future could be. It is a big thing to educate my child. There are 7 years left before I have to send my son to university. In the future I will need more money for my child's education. After paying for his education there will be no money left for me. [...] When I think of my old age, I feel that I have to consider remarriage. [Yun-Ja]

Even though Yun-Ja considers remarrying because of her uncertain financial future and had just met a man when I interviewed her, she is also aware that another marriage could cost her freedom:

The main drawback is that I will have to take care of my parents-in-law and other people. [...] I will also be subjected to restrictions of my traveling, which is my favorite hobby, and of socializing and drinking

with people. I would have much less freedom than I have now. [Yun-Ja]

Yun-Ja's concern about her economic future and about her age also emerges in So-Ra's narrative. So-Ra is in a relationship now and is planning to marry soon.

I often think that marriage is so tedious. I still miss being on my own. I could do what I wanted. It was like being free. [...] I am 45 years old now. At that time I had to think seriously about my old age. If I had a small shop that could support me I would rather have lived alone. That way I would have been freer and more comfortable. I might have been lonely, but you can't have everything. [...] As I am getting older, I am feeling more insecure about my future. When I have to give up my job I won't have a future. [So-Ra]

All the women who were concerned about their futures also expressed the desire to retain their freedom. They were also hesitant about remarrying because they were worried about their children's feelings and that their children might not get along with their new partners. The value that women attach to their freedom and independence is reflected by their resistance to getting married again.

5.4 Alternative Families

Eight of the women said that they did not want to remarry or did not want to rush to marry at all and they emphasized their fears that they could lose their sense of self and their freedom by getting remarried.

SN: Have you ever thought about marrying again?

Young-Hee: I would rather die than marry again.

SN: How about having a relationship with a man without marrying him?

Young-Hee: I thought about that because I do not hate men in general. However, I have experienced how marriage can change a man who was good and gentle. He [her ex-husband] was a nice man. If there had not been violence and unemployment, I think that our marriage would have worked. I still believe that. Rather than hating men, I feel that the rules and norms, which are attached to marriage, are a burden. It was impossible to change such strict roles on my own. I started feeling like a mad woman. Men think that things naturally go well in a marriage. If a man could understand my anger and my views about relationships between men and women, I would consider living with such a man. [...] No matter how wonderful a man may be, I will never marry, have a baby or become interconnected with a man's family through marriage again. [Young-Hee]

I do not want to marry again. Cohabitation is all right. I do not want to have anything to do with the institution of marriage again. I suffered terribly when I was trying to get a divorce because he did not want to divorce. I would live with someone I care about, but I do not want to register for marriage. [Na-Ri]

People can get married if they benefit from it. People can work to make a good marriage. I cannot say that they should not marry. Marriage can work for some people, but when I think about myself, it is obvious that I would be better off if I didn't get married. I am the kind of person who wants to live freely. I don't like someone interfering with my freedom. I don't want to interfere with other people's freedom either. [Ga-Rim]

Women's explanations of why they do not want to remarry reveal their critical views of the dominant family form as well as their criticism of the prevailing wisdom that a financially secure marriage ensures a safe future.

Even now, I have economic difficulties. However, I don't feel afraid. [...] I have many good friends and my brother and sister. It is very good to share things with them. I don't worry about my old age. [...] When I am old, I want to live with people and I want to live a communal life beyond blood family. [Ga-Rim]

I do not have money and I am living in a small room. However, I can do what I want, I can eat what I want and I can say when I don't like

something. I will soon turn forty and my friends are living in luxury apartments in Kangnam [a middle class area] and they have stable lives. I, on the other hand, have nothing now. After having such an experience as I have had, money does not really matter. There are things that are more important than money and I also want to share many things with people. Perhaps I would like to do voluntary work to help other people. [Min-Hae]

Some women's critical views of marriage lead them to construct relational selves beyond heterosexual marital relationships. These views also prompt them to question the meaning of family and to consider forms of family beyond the dominant form of heterosexual marriage and blood centered family life. These women thus create different families and selves in relation to others. Women who retain custody of their children have similar experiences. Some women are critical of the pain they experience because of social understandings of 'broken' or 'dysfunctional' families. These understandings often result in prejudice against and pity for their children because they do not come from ideal families. In Korea, it is common to consider alternative family forms as deviant. In a survey of 1000 adult women and men by Hankyoreh newspaper and Millworldbrown in 2006, 64.5% of respondents were opposed to single parenting and 72,6% were opposed to cohabitation even though in reality, the percentage of people who live with both parents and children are less than 50 % in the National Statics in 2006 (Lee Yoo Jin, 2006).

According to Reynolds and Wetherell, one of the main ways in which 'normative prescriptions such as compulsory heterosexuality operate is through the construction and policing of various forms of "otherness"' (Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003: 490). 'Right' becomes based on those who lack 'rightness'. (Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003: 490). The lack of social understanding and the normalization of heterosexual marital relationships create a public environment in which divorced people are regarded as abnormal.

Ji-Sue's story is typical of the social prejudice against divorced families:

The place where I feel the most pressure about divorce is at school- especially elementary school. All family models assume that there are four people in a nuclear family with a mother and a father. [...] Children whose families don't adhere to this model naturally feel hurt. When my child could not adjust in school, all the problems were linked to my divorce and the problems were blamed on the fact that my child had an absent father. One of the elementary school teachers said that I should reunite my family. How could she say something like that? Who is she to tell me that? I just laughed. Whenever I go to school, I feel wounded. We have become just some 'dysfunctional family. [Jie-Sue]

After telling me about her difficulties because of the social stigma attached to single parents, Ji-Sue's narrative reveals how she has moved on to new meanings of family that extend beyond marriage. She was living with her partner and friends in a flat. She included her partner and friends in her description of family.

I think that we are a family. We share our daily lives and we talk about so many things. Whenever any of us are having a hard time, we help each other out. [...] Even though it is not the nuclear family I used to have, we are the closest to one another and we depend on each other. It is the most important shelter that I have. When I was married, everything was done according to prescribed roles, even taking care of my child. However, now there are many things I can do in our family. Even taking care of my child is not just about caring for the child. It also includes socializing with other people and having a meaningful life with a good education within a group of mutual friends. Caring for my child is no longer just about me. [Ji-Sue]

Women's post-divorce journey leads to new understandings of their lives and new views of marriage. It also allows them to question the dominant meaning of family. These women resist marriage as well as the normalization of heterosexual marriage as the ideal adult relationship. As a result of this

resistance, some women expressed alternative notions of family relationships that extend beyond biological family ties.

However, even when women talk about their new knowledge and their desire for independence in new relationships, it does not mean that they are untouched by dominant discourses about the ideal marital relationship. The following women's narratives reveal the obstacles they continue to face, even though they value freedom and resist the institution of marriage.

It was so difficult when our business failed. [...] I felt lonely and poor. When I look at other women, even women who really do not have better resources and who are not as attractive as I am marry men who are well off and who take good care of their wives. Why couldn't I have that? When I think like that, I feel so sorry for myself. [Yun-Ja]

Yun-Ja's account reflects the hardship she suffered because of her economic situation and she finds it natural that she should compare herself to other women and that she should feel like a failure in comparison. In the society where the idea of marriage is normalized, divorced women can not escape from the sense of being disadvantaged or feeling like failures in 'a patriarchal culture' that is 'organised around the heterosexual couple' (Sandfield and Percy, 2003: 157). Yun-Ja's sense of being marginalized is thus clearly related to 'the privileging of marriage' (Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003). Single women are not free from the expectations of being ideal heterosexual women and good mothers, even after getting a divorce. Two women discussed how their ex-husbands continued to exert daily control over their sexuality. Young-Hee's story of how she had to regulate her relationship with a man is typical:

We live in the same village. I realized that I was worried that he knew about it [she lived with a man in her house a month after her divorce]. [She thought to herself] 'Why did I worry about it? It is my private life'. However, I don't want him to know about it. I realized that I automatically regulate my behavior by considering how my actions

would look through his eyes. Even though I did not consciously agree to it, his opinion naturally regulates me. [...] From the time of my marriage till now, it has been my habit to avoid making any trouble with him. It seems to be embedded in me. [...] I wonder when I will be able to live through my own eyes without being concerned about his views. [Young-Hee]

While women wish to live the way they want to, the social normalization of heterosexual marital life regulates their daily lives. Although women want to resist the types of marriage that result in their subordination, they are confronted with social discourses about ideal women and good mothers in a fundamentally heterosexual marital culture. Women have many problems in a society that is dominated by patriarchy and their journeys to find themselves involve constant struggles and negotiations with existing social norms. Women's resistance of 'dominant portrayals of the divorced as damaged and dissolved marriages as failures' (Sandfield, 2006: 169) is thus an ongoing task.

6. Summary

I have argued the ways that women and men interpret their meaning of loss in post-divorce reflect how individual accounts of marriage and divorce in Korea are interconnected within wider socio-economic constraints and sociocultural expectations in relation to others. Compared to men's narratives which did not talk about losing themselves in marriage, women's question about the unequal basis of marriage and their anger to attribute to their loss of self through their marital experience becomes the basis to reconstruct their self, raising the question about their beliefs and knowledge which promised their happy life in marriage. As Collins states, women's definition of the situation becomes the way of resisting stereotypes and controlling image and knowledge about women's conventional lives (Collins, 2000).

To understand women's and men's different ways of interpreting their past

highlights how divorce is not the same event to women and men but it brings different subjective experiences dependent on the social context. These different subjective experiences are particularly captured through gendered narratives of a 'new self' in relation to divergent meanings of loss and change, new relationships, and also difficulties they encounter. Even though women construct their divorce as a major way of obtaining their self-value, the realities they face bring constant struggles and negotiations. Developing new economic strategies is one of the main tasks in women's post-divorce realities and they usually have to cope with a lower income and reduced financial security (Arendell, 1986; Kurz, 1995). Therefore, women's journey toward a 'new self' cannot be distanced from social and cultural constraints.

CONCLUSION

Along with the increasing rate of divorce in Korea, statements issued by the media, government bodies and the religious establishment have provoked anxiety about the future of the family, focusing national attention on developing policies and strategies to prevent the breakdown of family life. This anxiety is clearly related to the new 'Healthy Family Law' which came into force in 2005. According to sub-section 1 of section 8 of the law, everybody should recognize the social importance of marriage and childbirth. Furthermore, the family is defined as heterosexual married couples, plus natural and adopted children. Within the limited view of the meaning of family as such, the law states that social supports for welfare or benefits will be available to 'healthy' or 'normal' families, meaning heterosexual married couples with children. Many progressive organizations were against the Law, suggesting that the ideology of the normal family that is based on a bloodline relative could strengthen the myth of a family-centred culture and the nuclear family. They also point out that the law does not take into account the diversity of family structures, such as single parents, people who remarry, married couples without children, same-sex couples. The Law reflects the social importance of marriage and childbirth, and adversely affects people's rights to choose marriage and childbirth. The Law is underpinned by social judgments on what is or is not a 'normal' or 'healthy' family, reinforcing women's responsibility to maintain the family, constructing women as the person who is in charge of childbirth and/or keeping the family harmonious. In addition to the 'Healthy Family Law', 'Married Couples Day' has been accepted as a national day of celebration since 2004. 'Married Couples Day' was originally promoted by Christian organisations, to protect against divorce, strengthen couple bonds, and promote better communication skills within the couple. Even though 'Married Couples Day' only has symbolic meaning they focus social and

media attention on divorce, and promote the understanding of the causes of divorce in terms of individual problems of lacking 'romantic time' or 'communication skills'. These social and legal changes stress how marriage and divorce is interconnected with wider social and cultural practices which emphasize conventional family values.

Feminist scholars resist a clear boundary between private and public, emphasising the importance of making invisible women's work visible and uncovering the inequalities of women's life at home, which is interconnected with social and cultural practices (Fineman, 1995: 23). Therefore, in order to dissolve the clear boundary of private space distanced from the influences of wider society, this thesis has explored the ways in which private narratives of divorce are interconnected with gendered responsibilities that are produced and constructed through heterosexual marriage. The experience of divorce is not 'purely individual' and not 'purely social' but is 'life history as the product of my own unique experiences within the social world' (Freeman, 1993: 211). Therefore, rather than questioning the individual problems that have, in various ways, led to divorce, I have raised questions about the social and patriarchal family system that the increase in divorce reveals, and what divorce shares with the social and cultural changes/ conflicts in contemporary heterosexual intimacy.

I have discussed how the individualization thesis does not portray the whole picture of how families live in reality. Castells states that the 'dissolution of households of married couples, by divorce and separation, is a first indicator of disaffection with a model of family that relied on the long-term commitment of family members' (1997: 138). However, it is simplistic to argue that this disaffection is directly connected with the undermining of the institution of marriage itself (Jackson, 1997: 339). Rather, divorce can be related to the dissolution of a particular marital relationship (Jackson, 1997). To understand the nature of the 'particular marital relationship' being undermined by divorce, the analysis needs to be located within social regulations and practices that

normalize heterosexual marital relationships and stigmatize divorce as a negative outcome or a failure (see chapter 3 and 4). These social practices mask women's resistance to patriarchal elements of marriage and the positive outcomes of divorce (Hackstaff, 1999). Also, negative attitudes towards divorce reinforce 'the marriage ideal and [obscure] any advantages of this transition for the increasing numbers facing single-again life' (Sandfield, 2006: 155). These social regulations and norms relating to divorce naturalize women's and men's respective family practices and conceal women's emotional and gendered burden in the name of marriage and family. Therefore, in order to enable women's silent voices to be heard, this thesis has carefully examined the following questions: 1) how is women's family work interconnected with underlying gendered power and authority? ; 2) how are women's and men's understandings of family and marriage linked to the prevailing familial ideals and family practices requiring different gendered practices and regulations? ; 3) how is women's daily emotional work a major cause of women's lack of power and loss of voice in relation to men's? ; 4) how are all these factors implicated in the process of divorce?

Women's and men's different needs within families and society are structured according to 'a relational and complementary system set up within heterosexuality' (Johnson, 2005:77). As I have explored, the different needs of women's and men's relational identity in marriage are linked to the couple's meeting, marriage and also divorce, constructing women's and men's different social and marital identities (see chapter 3, 5 and 6). The ideal that regards the man as the head of the family and the woman as a housewife, even when the woman works outside the home, is a construction that affects the daily process of marriage (see chapter 6). The material and social conditions in which marital relationships are formed raises the question of gender inequality and the institutionalization of heterosexuality, leading to women's and men's different understandings of individualization, intimacy and self within compulsory heterosexual relationships.

As the participants in this research were both women and men I have obtained detailed and localized voices enabling an exploration of the ways in which women's and men's different narratives of divorce and marriage are interconnected with their different social selves as heterosexual women and men. Women's and men's interpretations of their personal histories and understandings of their experience of marriage and divorce, come into being within an 'already existing web of human relationships' (Arendt, 1958: 184 cited in Jackson, 2002: 23). As Lawler states 'what we make of "experience" depends on what we know about the ways in which those experiences relate to the wider social circumstances of our lives' (2002: 250). Throughout this thesis, my main aim has not been to discuss the 'fact' or 'the true reasons for divorce' but rather, to explore how women and men's interpretation of the meanings of family, marriage, work and equality reflect different gendered ideals, responsibilities, negotiations, and challenges. Hackstaff states 'divorce culture signifies a conflict between gendered ideals, not only between male dominance and gender equality, but also between interpretations of gender equality itself' (1999: 49). Women's and men's different interpretations of the past, present and future become the basis of understanding 'gendered lives', which are produced through 'a variety of experiences – material, psychological, physical, social and cultural' locations (Fineman, 1995: 48). Without connecting divorce within persistent structural and cultural practices that support male dominance and contribute to women's loss of self, social emphasis of women's and men's individualization obscures the quest for 'equality' as the central issue in divorce accounts (Hackstaff, 1999). Therefore, I have sought to argue that the fragility of women's and men's relationships, which is considered to be the outcome of divorce, is not a consequence of women and men's individual attributes but rather, 'of the tension between strengthening cultural emphasis on intimacy, equality and mutuality in relationships and the structural supports of gender inequalities, which make these ideals difficult to attain' (Jamieson, 1999: 486). Drawing on my fieldwork data, I have explored the ways in which changed dimensions or

contexts of 'doing' heterosexual intimacy are understood, felt, explained and challenged by women and men who narrate their divorces. Divorced women and men, in narrating their 'failed' marriages, describe the particular marital and moral contexts of doing/failing heterosexual intimacy within gendered contexts.

Men's dominant interpretation of their marital problem is the 'pressure' they feel when they are regarded as 'the family provider'. Men's economic success or failure becomes the basis of their masculine identity. The pressures these men feel are crucial to their understanding of proper behaviour and actions for families and for wives. Economic power is what they actively want to obtain and it is also the basis of their self-value centred around public life. Differences between women and men are also crucial elements in men's understanding of marital life and intimacy. For men, gender issues are recognized as 'either natural or culturally acquired differences that are treated as part of husbands' and wives' makeup' (Dryden, 1999: 11). Their understanding of their differences from women is related to men's specific emphasis that their marital problems are not their individual traits, but rather are caused by a 'different social self', as the majority of men are often told 'men's lives are like that'. This different understanding is the particular way of making invisible their daily struggles in relation to women. This view masks 'the existence of gender inequalities in a marriage through locating the blame for any perceived inequalities in the personality (or biology) of the wife' (Dryden, 1999: 61). These men's understandings of sex differences are the basis of 'a masculinist discourse of divorce', in which 'differences between sexes were assumed to be self-evident, universal, and largely immutable' (Arendell, 1995: 52). As long as men consider that marital problems such as sexual problems, communications and lack of time are caused by 'biological difference' between women and men, their understanding of 'changes' cannot be related to wider approaches to their relationships with women. Therefore, how men consider 'change' or 'regret' is expressed through their lack of economic income, lack

of time or conflicts with their wives. Men's assumption of 'natural' sex differences masks gender inequality or femininity and masculinity as social practices and social norms within marriage.

Even though men interpret masculinity in opposition to femininity, as a natural differences from women, men's 'doing masculinity' simultaneously produces what is 'femininity' or the 'ideal woman', such as submissiveness or constant trust and belief in men's ability, and this requires women to confirm their husbands' masculinity in daily marital life. As Moon Seung Sook states, masculinity and femininity are not fixed and given identities. They are a position (or a place) 'in gender relations that is produced and maintained through culturally specific and continuous practices' (Moon Seung Sook, 2002: 83). Therefore, as I have explored, men's anger and various emotions towards women in marriage are related to individual female traits that are seen as complicating with 'ideal femininity', and do not reveal their 'trust' for their husbands. Women's trust or belief in men's ability and social life is a major consideration for men in heterosexual intimacy. Women's and men's different emotions in their descriptions of marital life becomes the 'lived experience and social relational dimension' that stresses 'the role played by such factors as gender and power relations in emotional experience' (Lupton, 1998: 38).

While doing masculinity and the masculine meaning of divorce is constructed in relation to men's autonomy and self-reliance in public life, the prominent theme in women's divorce stories is the process of finding their self-value through the experience of divorce. Through this research, I have found that no men mentioned that they obtained their self-value through their experiences of divorce but for women, obtaining self-value is a crucial interpretation of the meaning of divorce. In my sample, women's individualization or self-centred life is not directly connected within their work or higher education, but rather women's individual voice can be obtained through the resistance of their presumed belief or view of the ideal feminine roles in marriage, questioning the long endurance and emotional burden which was caused by the patriarchal

family system. As Smart and Neale state, most feminists see 'the development of the self is interactive and not a solitary activity' (Smart and Neale, 1999: 139). It does not mean that 'autonomy is not also valued by and for women, but it is always autonomy in context' (1999: 141). Ferguson states, due to women's and men's different ways of having a sense of self worth which is 'essentially connected to success or failure in meeting gender-related standards', the way that women obtain their sense of self worth is not achieved via 'imitating men or by adopting masculine goals and skills' (1989: 96). Therefore, even though the majority of women in my sample did public work outside home, divorce is described as a process of finding voice and of making visible their pain or anger which was caused by male-centred family and marital life. As I have explored, keeping family and marital commitment involves women in doing family work or doing intimacy for emotional and practical security which is pursued through various daily forms of gendered work (Ribbens McCarthy, et al., 2003: 8). Women's 'unnoticed' daily family work supports the emotional and psychological well-being of both individuals and the family collective because women's performance of both emotional sharing and practical care is fundamental to maintaining satisfying heterosexual intimate relationships (Duncombe and Marsden 1993; Jackson and Scott 1997; Jamieson, 1998, 1999 ; Seery and Crowley, 2000). Therefore, it is crucial to monitor how women 'actively create, contest, and resist microsociological structures of dominance in a variety of contexts' (Hackstaff, 1999: 12). This is an ongoing project to 'revalorize feminine-identified values and skills' which was denied by patriarchy inside marriage and society (Ferguson, 1989: 96).

Furthermore, the main finding through interviewing women was to understand the ways in which women's vulnerability and lack of confidence to make their voice audible in marriage was caused by men's intimidation or emotional blame and refusal to negotiate about family matters. Similarly, Dryden (1999: 147) found that it was common for women in her research to have 'feelings of

insecurity, lack of confidence and guilt' and a negative self-image that was caused by men's daily blaming or distancing and controlling of women. In my sample, men's daily control and emotional accusations have gradually rendered women silent and rendered inaudible their wish to have 'equal' marital life. However, as long as women's demands for changes to relationships are considered as 'causing marital problems', women themselves also hesitate to raise their voices. They are concerned about being regarded as the kind of woman who wants to take over men's authority and has a 'bad' reputation in the wider family network or community. Therefore, as I have argued, in order to explore women's life in marriage, the ways in which women and men are located in heterosexual marriage should not be categorised as a simple binary of equality/inequality or tradition/modern; the daily 'process' of losing women's self-worth and of devastating loss of self need to be given more careful consideration. Thus, for women, 'putting the self first is a way to counter male dominance in marriage' whilst men's 'putting the self first remains a way to sustain male dominance in marriage' (Hackstaff, 1999: 3). As I have discussed in chapter 8, women's and men's gendered narratives of a 'new self' in relation to loss and change after divorce are the central points in understanding how divorce is a journey for women to obtain their self-worth. Women's increasing rate of divorce needs to be understood within the process of women's invisible gendered responsibilities and also as the ways in which women's family responsibility to maintain commitment in marriage reflect 'a legacy of male dominance' (Hackstaff, 1999: 214).

Most of previous research on divorce in Korea has been quantitative, focusing on grounds for divorce and trends in rates. This thesis contributes to much needed qualitative research in order to begin to understand the complex gendered and moral meanings of divorce and suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to the ways in which women and men make sense of divorce in relation to their social and cultural locations. Further research on divorce can contribute to a more detailed analysis of intersections between gender, age and

class. Even though I have recruited people from various class and educational backgrounds in order to search for diversity and complexity, these resources are too limited to discuss in detail the differences and similarities among different class background of women and men. I have explored men's different economic resources and also the different impact which work outside the home has on women's status. In future research, analysis of divorce needs to develop in more detail how dimensions of intimacy can vary within different class backgrounds. Due to the lack of qualitative research exploring both women and men, I have mainly focused on gender as the main theme in this thesis. In addition to the need for future research on the intersection between gender and class, age is also crucial to explore the interconnected aspects of gender. In Korea there is a limited amount of research exploring the viewpoint of older women. The alternative lifestyles of older women, who perhaps have not been married or have become single again have not been analysed without returning to conventional negative images of 'being lonely'. Exploring diverse ways in which women make friendships or alternative families can be crucial to imagining a world which differs from social or conventional regulations that consider heterosexual marital life as an ideal adult life. As divorce reflects various ways of individual and social realities, the requirement for further research should be broadly connected to legal and structural issues. Future studies need to prioritise the exploration of women and men's inequitable division of labour and resources and emotional and sexual asymmetry within the social regulation of heterosexual intimacy. It is crucial to listen to women's voices in future studies of family and personal relationships. To tell women's stories and also to listen to women's voice is essential in reflecting their life and different points of view. Therefore, researching women's lives is an exploration of different aspects of their/our life as 'the act of sharing' to 'create a world that is more than the sum of its individual parts' (Jackson, 2002: 39-40).

Appendix I

The Years of/Age At Marriage/Dicorce and Length of Marriage Years

Their age in 2005	Year of/ age at marriage	Year of/ age at divorce	Length of marriage years
F1 (43) Yun-Ja	1988/26	1994/32, initiator	6
F2 (46) So-Ra	1990/29	1998/37, initiator	8
F3 (32) Sue-Mi	2000/27	2005/32, initiator	5
F4 (39) Min-Hae	1991/25	2001/35, initiator	10
F5 (35) Mi-Ran	1996/26	2001/31, initiator	5
F6 (41) Young-Hee	1995/31	2004/40, initiator	9
F7 (41) Kyoung-Na	1989/25	2004/40, initiator	15
F8 (41) Ju-Ni	1990/26	2000/36, initiator	10
F9 (34) Mi-Ya	1998/27	2000/29, initiator	2
F10 (38) Na-Ri	1995/28	2004/37, initiator	10
F11 (36) Soo-Yun	2003/34	2004/35, initiator	Less than one year
F12 (38) Jo-An	1995/28	1998/31, initiator	3
F13 (41) Jeong-Mi	1992/28	2003/39, initiator	11
F14 (44) Ji-Sue	1992/31	1996/35, initiator	4
F15 (46) Ga-Rim	1987/28	1991/31, initiator	4
F16 (35) Su-Ji	1998/28	2001/31, initiator	3
F17 (38) Han-Na	1994/27	2000/33, initiator	6
M1 (42) Chang-Jin	1989/26	1991/28, Non-I	2
M2 (48) Tae-Soo	1991/34	2002/45, Non-I	11
M3 (46) Gi-Chan	1988/29	2004/45, initiator	16
M4 (39) Han-Il	1993/27	1994/28, Non-I	Two months
M5 (33) Kee-Jae	2002/30	2004/32, Non-I	2
M6 (38) Min-Su	1995/28	2004/37, Non-I	9
M7 (35) Hong-Sye	1995/25	2004/34, Non-I	10
M8 (38) Myoung-Gi	1998/31	1999/32, Non-I	1
M9 (38) Hee-Tae	1996/26	2003/36, Initiator	7
M10 (39) Sang-Chul	1996/30	1998/32, Initiator	2
M11 (36) Hyun-Gil	2000/31	2002/33, Initiator	2
M12 (40) Joo-Min*	2000/35	2001/36, Non-I	1
M13 (45) Chul-Su	1992/33	2003/43, Non-I	11

* Joo-Min remarried in 2002 and divorced in 2003.

Appendix II

The Level of Education (For Both Interviewee and Spouse)

	Interviewees' level of education	Their spouses' level of education
F1 (43) Yun-Ja	High school	High school
F2 (46) So-Ra	University graduate	University graduate
F3 (32) Sue-Mi	High school	University graduate
F4 (39) Min-Hae	Master graduate	Doctor's degree
F5 (35) Mi-Ran	Master graduate	Master degree
F6 (41) Young-Hee	College graduate	High school
F7 (41) Kyoung-Na	High school	University graduate
F8 (41) Ju-Ni	Dropped out of University	University graduate
F9 (34) Mi-Ya	University graduate	University graduate
F10 (38) Na-Ri	University graduate	University graduate
F11 (36) Soo-Yun	Master degree	Master degree
F12 (38) Jo-An	University graduate	University graduate
F13 (41) Jeong-Mi	University graduate	Dropped out of university
F14 (44) Ji-Sue	University graduate	University graduate
F15 (46) Ga-Rim	University graduate	Dropped out of university
F16 (35) Su-Ji	University graduate	middle or high school
F17 (38) Han-Na	High school	University graduate
M1 (42) Chang-Jin	High school	High school
M2 (48) Tae-Soo	University graduate	High school
M3 (46) Gi-Chan	University graduate	High school
M4 (39) Han-Il	Middle school	Middle school
M5 (33) Kee-Jae	University graduate	University graduate
M6 (38) Min-Su	University graduate	University graduate
M7 (35) Hong-Sye	High school	University graduate
M8 (38) Myoung-Gi	High school	High school
M9 (38) Hee-Tae	High school	High school
M10 (39) Sang-Chul	High school	High school
M11 (36) Hyun-Gil	High school	High school
M12 (38) Joo-Min	High school	University graduate
M13 (45) Chul-Su	High school	High school

Note: Middle school is up to age 16 (Minimum school living age).
High school is up to age 19.

Appendix III

The Occupation Before/After Marriage (For Both Interviewees and Their Spouses)

	Interviewees' Occupation Before / After Marriage	Their Spouses' Occupation Before / After marriage
F 1 (43) Yun-Ja	office worker / office worker	Unemployed / office worker/ long unemployed (various jobs)
F2 (46) So-Ra	Unemployed / housewife	salesman / salesman
F3 (32) Sue-Mi	graphic designer / graphic designer	artist / artist
F4 (39) Min-Hae	teacher / housewife	student / student and lecturer
F5 (35) Mi-Ran	office worker / housewife and teacher	student (studying abroad)/ office worker
F6 (41) Young-Hee	secretary of cultural organization / housewife	office worker / office worker
F7 (41) Kyoung-Na	office worker / housewife	soldier / office worker for insurance
F8 (41) Ju-Ni	activist of a trade union / activist of a trade union / independent film producer	office worker / office worker
F9 (34) Mi-Ya	teacher / housewife	salesman / salesman
F10 (38) Na-Ri	nurse / nurse	office worker/ student
F11 (36) Soo-Yun	teacher / teacher	office worker / office worker
F12 (38) Jo-An	office worker / housewife	office worker/ office worker
F13 (41) Jeong-Mi	research worker / teacher	Unemployed / self-employed person
F14 (44) Ji-Sue	research worker / housewife	private teacher / artist and teacher
F15 (46) Ga-Rim	Political activist / private teacher	political activist / political activist
F16 (35) Su-Ji	teacher / housewife	policeman / policeman
F17 (38) Han-Na	businesswoman / businesswoman	businessman / businessman
M1 (42) Chang-Jin	self-employed / self-employed	Unemployed / housewife
M2 (48) Tak-Soo	office worker / office worker	office worker / self-employed
M3 (46) Gi-Chan	office worker / office worker	office worker / housewife
M4 (39) Han-II	political activist / political activist	factory worker / factory worker

M5 (33) Kee-Jae	office worker / reporter	Unemployed / housewife and organizer for distributing organic food
M6 (38) Min-Su	self-employed / student and producer	owner of café / housewife
M7 (35) Hong-Sye	office worker / student	nurse / nurse
M8 (38) Myoung-Gi	HGV driver / HGV driver	office worker/ house wife
M9 (38) Hee-Tae	bank clerk / supervisor for a clothing retail chain	bank clerk / housewife
M10 (39) Sang-Chul	office worker / self-employed	nurse / nurse and housewife
M11 (36) Hyun-Gil	office worker / office worker	private teacher / private teacher
M12 (38) Joo-Min	fashion model / fashion model	bank clerk / bank clerk
M13 (45) Chul-Su	driver/ self-employed	office worker / housewife

Note: Two women, F2 and F7, were housewives during their marriage. The wives of 4 men were housewives during their whole marriage.

Appendix IV

Interview Themes

1. General Information

Age; family background; education; occupation before during and after marriage; family background (for both interviewee and spouse).

2. Meeting and Marrying ex-spouse

Previous romantic experience; how/when first met; the difference between dating partner and marriage partner; motives for choosing/marrying spouse; parental approval/disapproval; parental involvement in choice and in wedding.

3. Experience of marriage

Good /bad memories of marriage; the meaning of family; forms of (and lack of) intimacy; tensions between women's jobs and family roles; the meaning of having, bringing up children, the changed couple relationship after having children; relationships with in-laws; sources of unhappiness in marriage; reasons for marriage problems; the main causes of/motives for divorce; the relationships with husbands' (wives) parents.

4. Process of divorce

Practical difficulties in deciding to divorce (issues about children/where to live/relationship with others); legal process; relationship with your parents/ partner during the divorce; dealing with emotional issues.

5. After divorce

Changes in self identity; changes in view of marriage; positive and negative feelings after divorce; future plans and expectations; economic situation; relationship with ex-husband/ wife); social prejudice and stigma; change in daily life and social life.

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