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**Capitalism, patriarchy, and autonomy: Women factory workers
in the Korean economic miracle**

Kim, Seung-Kyung, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1990

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A

**CAPITALISM, PATRIARCHY, AND AUTONOMY:
WOMEN FACTORY WORKERS IN THE KOREAN ECONOMIC MIRACLE**

by

SEUNG-KYUNG KIM

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York.

1990

1990

SEUNG-KYUNG KIM

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

**CAPITALISM, PATRIARCHY, AND AUTONOMY:
WOMEN FACTORY WORKERS IN THE KOREAN ECONOMIC MIRACLE**

by

Seung-Kyung Kim

Advisor: Professor Joan P. Mencher

This dissertation, based on fieldwork in Masan, Korea (1986-88), considers the position of women factory workers within economic development and how the constraints of capitalism and patriarchy have affected their lives. The Korean government established the Masan Export Processing Zone in 1970 as part of an export-led industrialization program. As in the export processing industry throughout the world, Masan relied on a labor force composed mostly of young single females. In spite of Masan's economic development, workers in the Zone were exploited and excluded from power, and in 1987 the workers of Masan joined the labor uprising against the government and the corporations.

The companies in Masan enjoyed an inexpensive, hardworking and docile labor force until 1987, when these workers demonstrated and struck for higher pay and better working conditions. What caused the dramatic change in their attitudes toward the government and employers? Why did these young women workers decide to organize themselves and who are their leaders? Based on a comparative study of women factory workers in the different industries

represented in the Zone, this study examines who these young women are and why their attitudes are changing. This study also looks at how women's individual struggles to improve their lives are related to their participation in collective actions.

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CHAPTER I. WOMEN WORKERS IN THE EXPORT PROCESSING INDUSTRY

A. Introduction

South Korea is now known for its spectacular economic growth, but as recently as the 1950s it was one of the poorest countries in the world. Since then, Korea has made great progress in industrialization although it remains heavily dependent on foreign capital, technology, and trade. A crucial factor for Korean economic development has been its well disciplined, hard working, labor force. In order to assess the success of the industrialization program, it is necessary to consider its impact on the workers involved in the process. Korea's development strategy would not have succeeded without its workers' high level of productivity and their acceptance of low wages and long working hours. This study of women factory workers in the city of Masan examines how development has affected the lives of workers, who they are, and why their attitudes are changing.

Between 1962 and 1987, the Korean economy grew at an average rate of 8.9% per year. In order to achieve these rates of growth the government borrowed heavily from foreign financial institutions and tried to attract direct investment from multinational corporations. As part of its development plan, the government set up two export processing zones: one in Masan in 1970 and the other in Iri

in 1974. It encouraged foreign companies to invest in these zones by providing a number of incentives (e.g. cheap labor, tax holidays, exemptions from export duties, land sites, laws restricting union activities). Korea's export-oriented industrialization concentrated on light, labor-intensive industries, where cheap, unskilled labor was required (e.g., textiles, rubber footwear and electronics), and it absorbed massive numbers of women workers because young women were the least expensive labor force available.

Newspapers and television often referred to these women as the back-bone of Korean economic development. Despite the praise lavished on them, their hard work did not translate into higher wages or improved working conditions. During the 1980s workers became more conscious of the gap between their own experiences and the "economic miracle," and became increasingly distrustful of such government slogans as "development first, distribution later."

Establishing export processing zones to attract foreign investment became a popular tactic for countries attempting export-led development beginning in the early 1960s. Export Processing Zones (sometimes called Free Export Zones or Free Trade Zones) are specific areas set up by governments to attract foreign investment and to manufacture goods, not for domestic consumption, but for export. Export processing zones are expected to (1) earn foreign exchange, (2) reduce high unemployment, and (3) aid in transferring technology.

Export processing zones throughout the world have similar characteristics: They are specifically designated industrial areas where fully or partially foreign-owned firms can import raw materials or semi-finished goods free of duty for the purpose of manufacturing, processing, or assembling items for export. Generally, the state plays a direct role in controlling union organization so as to preclude labor disruption, and supplies land, utilities, transport facilities, and buildings within the zone at subsidized rates. Foreign firms are also offered incentives over and above those extended to investors outside the Zone (AMPO 1977:1; Grunwald and Flamm 1985).

Export processing zones rely on a labor force composed mostly of young single females (Chapkis and Enloe 1983; Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Fuentes and Ehrenrich 1983; Grossman 1979; Kung 1976; Lee 1976; Lim 1978; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Ong 1982, 1983, 1987; Safa 1981; Yoon 1976, 1977),¹ much as in the early stages of industrialization in western Europe and the United States (Tilly and Scott 1978). Multinational corporations created a new international division of labor, in which the production process is divided among various plants of one firm which are located in different parts of the world (Frobel et al. 1980). Capital intensive/high tech manufacturing processes were kept in developed countries, and the parts of the production process that are allocated to export processing zones are

those which depend on an abundant supply of cheap labor. Young women are hired because they are usually the cheapest labor force available.

Despite the long history of the Korean Free Export Zones, there has been little research conducted about their impact on workers compared to zones in other parts of the world.² The Korean government's tight control of these Free Export Zones made it almost impossible for scholars to carry out research during the 1970s. Only one fact-finding survey article appeared during this period, in a left-wing journal (AMPO) published in Japan. During the 1980s, a number of sociologists in Kyong-nam University conducted surveys among workers in the Masan Free Export Zone, however, they were discouraged from this kind of research by the negative attitude of administrative officers of the Zone.

I chose Masan as my field site for several reasons. I was interested in examining the impact of the industrial process and how factory work affected workers. I also wanted to be able to compare Korean workers to those in similar circumstances in other parts of the world. Masan was the first Free Export Zone in Korea and had longer history than Iri. It was also much larger than Iri³, and offered a much greater scope for comparison between different types of management and industry.⁴

During the sixteen months of my field work in Masan I was able to observe significant changes in the way workers

felt about, and reacted to their situation. When I first arrived in 1986, there were no labor unions. Unions had never been permitted to organize, and most women workers did not know what they were and were not interested in belonging to one. They regarded themselves as middle-class and most supported the official policies which advocated "development foremost." Most of them thought their standard of living had improved a lot. Many commented that there were no beggars any more. There was no indication that workers wanted to make major changes in the way society worked. If they were unhappy about their situation, it was merely with their fate as individuals not as part of a class.

During the nationwide labor struggle in 1987, however, most of the workers in the Zone participated in demonstrations and strikes. What caused the dramatic change in their attitudes toward the government and employers? It became my main objective to learn how these young women workers decided to organize themselves and who their leaders were. I was also interested in the relationship between workers' individual struggles to improve their lives, and the collective actions taken during this time. Among the factors that were obviously important to the positions taken in labor activity were age, education, marital status, and class background.

B. The New International Division of Labor:

1. Introduction

Beginning in the early 1960s, multinational corporations from developed countries (e.g. U.S., Japan, Western Europe) built factories in Third World countries to manufacture export goods for the world market. This export-oriented industrialization was promoted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and became a popular development strategy for Third World countries. The new international division of labor which was created by multinational corporations divided the production process among various plants of one firm which are located in different parts of the world (Frobel et al. 1980).

The new international division of labor is a product of the collaboration of economic forces in both developed and developing countries. In the 1960s, the "deskilling process" was already going on due to the leap in manufacturing technology (see Braverman, 1974). Technological advances made in communication and transportation made the flight of capital easy. Furthermore, many developing countries were experiencing failures in their attempts to modernize through import substitution. Due to the backwardness of the industries, wages were low and the domestic market could not absorb the

goods which were produced (Safa, 1981). Hence, many Third World countries tried to increase manufacturing as part of export-oriented development strategies, hoping specifically to (1) earn foreign exchange, (2) reduce high unemployment, and (3) transfer technology. Governments in developing countries regarded export processing as the answer to their problems of chronic high unemployment; e.g., a Malaysian government official said "we wanted electronics companies because they are so fast-moving... they come in and quickly soak up people" (Wall Street Journal, September, 20, 1973).

Lim defines export-oriented industrialization as a phase of monopoly capitalism. She identifies three stages in foreign investment by the U.S., Japan, and Western Europe: (1) The traditional colonial mode of production, concentrating on the extraction of primary raw material from the colonized countries and the import of manufactured consumer goods from metropolitan countries; (2) The import substitute period, concentrating on the establishment of manufacturing industries to replace imported manufactured goods in the local market; (3) The new international division of labor, involving labor-intensive factories in developing countries manufacturing goods for export to the developed countries under the aegis of multinational corporations (1978:1-2).

In those countries that chose a development strategy which relied on export processing, several problems

eventually emerged. First, the only foreign exchange which the host country received from the multinational corporations was the wages paid, which were much lower than what the company would pay in a developed country; Tax incentives practically eliminated any direct revenues for the host government; Multinational corporations operating in EPZs were allowed to repatriate practically all of the profits made from their operations, the host government had no control over reinvestment. Second, the EPZ typically created a new, under-paid labor force of young single females instead of providing jobs at the wage levels needed to support families. Thus, even with EPZs, unemployment among males remained high. Third, the host government had to provide all the infrastructure needed for multinational corporations to operate in their countries, and since multinational corporations brought only the most labor-intensive part of the manufacturing process, the transfer of technology was minimal. With the new international division of labor, capital intensive/high tech manufacturing processes were kept in developed countries. The only reason for multinational corporations to move operations to Third World countries was because they provided cheap and abundant labor.

2. Women's Position in the Labor Market

Export processing industries throughout the world depend on the labor of young, single females--16 to 25 years

old (80% to 90%, according to Fuentes and Ehrenrich 1983). Using female labor in manufacturing is not a recent phenomenon. Ever since the beginning of the industrial revolution, female labor was sought by textile factories, where the work was considered as "women's work" (cf. Gutman 1977, Hareven 1982). Historians (e.g. Kessler-Harris 1981, 1982; Hareven and Langenbach 1978; Dublin 1981) have described the mix of exploitation and opportunity that factory work provided for women as they came to participate in paid industrial labor.

In order to attract foreign investment, the Malaysian government put out an investment brochure which emphasized the nimble-fingered nature of oriental girls:

The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care... who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance, to contribute to the efficiency of a bench-assembly production line than the oriental girl? (cited in Lim, 1978:7).

Thus, "women's nature" was put forward as the main reason for the characteristics that made them initially the preferred labor force. However, "nimble fingers" and "docility" are not women's nature, but characteristics which women acquire through socialization. In order to explain the preponderance of young female assembly line workers, we need to inquire deeper than women's natural appropriateness.

Unrestricted by labor legislation or regulation, the multinational corporations have recreated industrial

conditions similar to, or perhaps worse, than those found in the workshops of Europe and America more than a hundred years ago (Rosen 1987:22). One researcher describes labor conditions of the export processing industry as "wages on a par with what an 11-year-old boy could earn on a paper route, and living conditions resembling what Engels found in Manchester" (Ehrenrich 1982).

Women have traditionally been paid less than men, constituting a source of cheap labor for industrial capitalism (Saffioti 1978). This reflects the subordinate status of women both in society and in the family. The subordinate position of women paralleled the assumption that women's income is supplementary to that of a male provider (see Sacks 1974; Hartmann 1976). This pattern persists to the present day, even in areas of high male unemployment (e.g. Mexico, Caribbean, Malaysia) and even where a high percentage of women are heads of households (Safa, 1981).

Thus far there is no unified theoretical model that adequately explains the position of women workers in "world market factories" (Frobel et al. 1978:139). Three theories have attempted to examine the origins of sex discrimination in the labor market and to explain how sex segregation is embedded in the structure of monopoly capitalism's characteristic labor market: status attainment theory, dual market theory, and socialist feminist theory (Sokoloff 1980). Status attainment theory⁵ assumes that "what women

bring with them to the labor market is the major determinant of their position in the U.S. occupational structure" (ibid:187). This theory takes up on the supply characteristics of human capital theory and argues that "changing individual women's cultural or normative attributes is essentially what is necessary to improve or equalize women's opportunities in the labor market" (ibid.). Role conflict between home and labor force responsibilities is featured as the source of sex discrimination. Theorists of this camp did not take larger structural forces into consideration (e.g. patriarchy or capitalism). Patriarchy and capitalism were taken "as given, factored out, controlled for, or otherwise dismissed" (ibid:189). Thus this theory is not suitable for explaining women's position globally, or even in the U.S. labor market.

Segmented labor market models (Edwards, Reich, and Gordon 1975; Gordon, Reich, and Edwards 1982), which have developed from premises of a dual labor market theory (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Piore 1975), seek to explain women's disadvantaged market position with the sex-segmented or dual structure of the U.S. labor market. Unless the structure of the labor market is altered, they argue, little would change for women in the market. Dual labor market theory does not attempt to relate women's role as mother and wife with the labor market, thus, does not deal with the issues of patriarchy. Furthermore, the way in which

"capitalism is related to the development of the dual labor market is taken as given" (Sokoloff 1980:191). Its model is too narrow to explain the trend toward internationalization of production and the development of a female work force on a global scale.

In order to understand the predominantly female character of the global manufacturing force, a deeper exploration into the sexual division of labor in both the public (i.e. the market) and the private (i.e. the family) spheres is needed. In other words, the organization of production processes and labor markets has to be linked to the sexual division of labor in any explanation of the position of the female labor force in multinational corporations in Third World countries. Socialist feminist perspectives provide a foundation for analyzing women's roles within both domestic labor market structures and the international division of labor.

Socialist feminist theorists have made two important contributions to the understanding of the female labor force in the global assembly line. First, they present a historical framework explaining women's subordinate status within the division of labor in both the family and the economic market place (e.g. Beechey 1979; Sacks 1974). Second, they propose a new interpretation of the theoretical concept of the reserve army of labor (Ferguson 1979; Hartmann 1976; Pearson and Elson 1981). They argue that

there is a dialectical relationship between two mutually dependent systems, capitalism and patriarchy, which together have shaped and reinforced the existence of economic classes and male dominance in capitalist economies (Ferguson 1979:279).

Following Marx and the early Marxist feminists, socialist feminists consider that "capitalism and the industrial capitalist construction of women's position in the home are major causes of the problems faced by women in the labor market" (Sokoloff 1980:196). However, they further argue that "an analysis of women's problems in modern capitalist society requires an understanding of the complex effects of the social relations of patriarchy as well" (ibid.:197). Socialist feminists analyze the sexual division of labor both in the home and in the market as a synthesis of patriarchy and capitalism.

Similar relationships occur in socialist countries, such as China, where the existing patriarchal ideology, the state, and external capitalist markets interact in the process of industrializing (cf. Wolf 1985). Multinational corporations began investing in China for the cheap labor of female workers. The Chinese government wanted to use these opportunities for its own ends: industrialization. Furthermore, since the goods these young women workers produce are for the capitalist markets outside China, China cannot help being a part of the global assembly line (see

Pepper 1988; Andors 1988). Thus, women enter either the capitalist or socialist labor markets as bearers of undervalued labor (Pearson and Elson 1981:29).

Young female workers in the offshore production factories constitute a highly vulnerable, docile, and manipulable work force because of "(1) their behavior, expectations and attitudes (linked to a gender-specific socialization process); (2) their relative youth (and consequent lack of experience); (3) their subordinate position within their own households" (Fernandez-Kelly 1983a:72). Once they have entered the work force, young women are manipulated to keep them inferior, subordinate and "marginal" vis-a-vis males. The management manipulates traditional patriarchal ideas regarding women's role, behavior, and status through highly sophisticated human relations techniques on the jobs to facilitate workers control and identification with company (see Lim, 1978, 1983a; Grossman, 1979). These techniques include (1) exploiting femininity and gender roles through beauty contests or sewing classes and (2) creating a factory life-style distinct from that of the general society (i.e. the notion of liberated women is reflected on "successful working women" in make-up, tight jeans and high heels). In this way, the management achieves two main goals: it improves work productivity and identification with company; and prevents the rise of any kind of unified strength among

the women workers (Grossman 1979:3-4). Thus, in the transition from beauty contest to production competition, the obvious goal of the management becomes very clear, that of "control" (ibid.:3). While the ultimate objective is not the manipulation of gender ideology/identity, this manipulation is a critical element toward the realization of profits, "through (1) worker control and identification with the company and (2) ideological affiliation with the West--or what the West is construed to represent" (Khan 1984:3).

3. Capitalism and Patriarchy in Southeast Asia:

A Parallel Case

Economist Linda Lim explored the impact of multinational corporations on women workers in Southeast Asia. She re-labeled the "industrial indoctrination" strategies used by the management, and called them, instead, "cultural indoctrination" because competition created among workers by the merit system does not stop at the production level. She argued that it goes one step further: By using the banner of "femininity" orientation (e.g. cosmetic classes, beauty contests), management encourages "individualism" transforming "gender" into a commodity (1978). Through these mechanisms, and by encouraging affiliation with the company, management preempts the tendency for workers to develop class consciousness. They are urged to feel "free" from the home, society, and

traditional culture, but not from the factory. As Grossman pointed out, management relies on both "traditional" and "modern" ideology to manipulate workers in order to both maximize profit and undermine worker organization. Though Lim contrasts Japanese firms' "paternalistic" management with U.S. firms' "one big family" policy, she argues "patriarchy" provides the edge which both styles of management use to exploit workers. Thus, Lim argues "patriarchy" in S.E. Asia is the basis for factories' control over women workers (1983a). According to her, management did not create the gender inequality in this particular area, because it was already there.

Lim's argument that multinational corporations did not necessarily worsen the situation of young female workers becomes clearer in her later works (1983a and 1983b). Instead of inventing the milieu where women are exploited, she argues that multinational corporations merely took advantage of what is already in existence (1983b). Moreover, she points out that the multinational corporations offer better wages and working conditions than domestic occupations, giving women a limited chance to improve their positions. For supporting evidence, she observes that the workers in multinational corporations delay marriage and child-bearing (which she considers an improvement in women's status), and argues that this is because factory work is less compatible with family responsibilities than more

flexible traditional women's jobs. However, her explanation as to why women delay their marriages seems to be based on the demographic assumptions from the "role incompatibility" theory. Salaff's works (1976a and 1976b) clearly show that it is economic pressure from the family that causes workers to delay their marriages. Furthermore, Salaff argues that the economic contributions made by daughters do not automatically increase their participation in decision-making in other family matters. In other words, daughters can make purely personal decisions, such as who they date, but they cannot decide when they marry or what kind of wedding banquet they will have, both of which are family concerns (1976b:452).

Aihwa Ong (1983) criticizes Lim's position which takes "patriarchy" as given. She examines the interaction between local forms of patriarchy and the value systems introduced by multinational corporations in Malaysia. She argues that even with the pre-existing ideas of "patriarchy", Japanese multinationals intervened to construct a "common-sense" gender relationship of male domination and female subordination which was suitable for power relationships in the industrial system. According to her, the Japanese corporations influenced and reformulated Malay norms of male-female relations in three areas: "(1) the justification of industrial sexual division of labor in biological terms; (2) the imagery/idiom of family in

corporate policies; and (3) the foreman-operator relationship which daily reproduces male domination and female subordination in the production process (1983:15). These three different though overlapping forms, she posits, "generate ideological and social acceptance of systematic female subjection to male control, thereby producing a new system of gender hierarchy" (ibid.:15).

Malay gender relations, thus, took on a new form in which female was always inferior to male, and which was in part adopted from Confucianism, so that Japanese ideals of male domination and female obedience are produced in the daily interactions between foreman and operator on the shop-floor (ibid.:25). Corporate policies supported by the idioms of family, religion, patriotism, acquire moral resonance with such key Malay values as cooperation, loyalty, and sacrifice. Such ideological synchrony of corporate policies and Malay mores, Ong argues, "help to disguise the factory exploitation of local woman" (ibid.:21).

One important mechanism used by the Japanese corporate management to control women is to form an alliance with elders and parents. Village elders act as labor-recruiters and intermediaries between factory and workers, enabling management to recruit a malleable labor force, by screening out potential trouble-makers and instructing village workers to maintain the village's reputation. Thus, rural factory

women maintain their self-esteem by rejecting the social emancipation promised by wage employment (ibid.:41).

Controlling workers takes more than an alliance between management and parents/elders. Specifically, it requires the intervention of state and civil mechanisms of social control. Media unjustly labeled workers' lives outside the factory as "indecent consumerism," camouflaging the situation of exploitation in the work place and patriarchy in the home. According to Ong, "by riveting public attention on women's consumption, the press trivializes the women's work and helps divert discontent over their weak market position into the manageable channels of a youth culture" (ibid.). These Malay industrial workers are thus controlled by men in every social situation. Workers are aware of this oppression from every direction but they have been unable to express their discontent except as "mass hysteria."

C. Capitalism, Gender Ideology, and Patriarchy in Korea

The particular form of exploitation and sexual oppression that arises depends on both the exposure to the world economy and the preexisting patterns of patriarchy and cultural forms of oppression. Although both patriarchy and capitalism have been used to exploit women, the goals of each system are not identical and these two systems are sometimes contradictory (see, Barrett 1980; Beechey 1979;

Eisenstein 1978; Hartmann 1976, 1981; McDonough and Harrison 1978; Mies 1986).⁶ In this section, I examine the dialectical relationship between capitalism and patriarchy in Korea and how this relationship affects women workers in Masan Free Export Zone (MAFEZ). As of 1988, the multinational companies in MAFEZ employed a total of about 38 thousand workers, of whom 29 thousand were women. These multinationals perpetuate patriarchy by using gender ideology in the work place to control women workers, however, by giving these women roles outside the family the multinationals erode some of the foundations of patriarchal values.

The dialectical interaction between capitalism and patriarchy in export processing industries results in three tendencies: (1) the intensification of existing forms of gender subordination; (2) decomposition of existing forms; and (3) recomposition of new forms of gender subordination. Factory work in export-oriented factories may exhibit all of these three tendencies: for example, the father's authority over their daughters may be strengthened in spite of the wages earned by the women. Early marriages may be circumvented, but only at the expense of commodifying women in the open market so that they may compete for husbands. Women are also subject to the new authority of men as supervisors and bosses in the factory (Elson and Pearson 1981:157-59).

The specific form of patriarchy in Korea derives from Confucian ideology. Confucianism was established as a Korea's state ideology in the 14th century. It eliminated women's roles in society outside the family, and restricted them within the family. Confucianism is a conservative ideology which favors the upper classes. In order to live in accordance with Confucian ideology families need resources: Male household heads have to be able to provide for their families. Poverty is incompatible with Confucianism. Thus, lower class families, were frequently unable to put Confucian values into practice, even if they believed them to be appropriate. Under the Confucian family system the head of the family is responsible for the family's well being, and all other members are subordinate to him. A woman is subordinate to her father until she is married, she is subordinate to her husband while she is married, and she is subordinate to her son when she becomes widowed.⁷

Asian female labor was advertised as "well-disciplined," "hard-working," and "docile," by governments trying to attract foreign investors (Kung 1983; Lim 1978). These "cultural" traits have been emphasized in descriptions of East Asian workers:

Because of a long Confucian tradition of respect for authority, the degree to which the work force is susceptible to organization and discipline tends to be high in Korea. (Morawetz 1981:134).

The docility of Asian women workers has been exploited by both socialist and capitalist parts of the world-economy. Contemporary industrial production, particularly in those industries that predominantly employ women such as textiles and electronics, is supported by ideologies which perpetuate docility in female labor (Lutz 1988:58-59).

D. Overview

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters. Chapter two discusses my research methodology. In addition to a conventional description of the field site and research techniques, it includes sections entitled, "Issues in studying one's own culture," and "Being an anthropologist and a worker." Any anthropologist studying his/her own culture needs to consider the issue of being a culture bearer as well as the personal/emotional and political aspects of his/her project. My personal experience working in a factory was also an important part of my research since I was able to learn about workers both as an outsider (anthropologist) and as an insider (worker).

Chapter three summarizes the political economy of Korea and discusses the debate over whether recent Korean history is an economic miracle, dependent development or the development of dependence. The periods I discuss here begin with the "import substitution and the U.S. aid period" from Korean independence in 1948 to 1960, essentially the Rhee

Syng-man regime. The next phase, the "outward-looking development period" covers the Park Chung-hee regime from 1961 until 1979. The Masan Free Export Zone was established during this period as part of Park's export-oriented development plan. During this time Korea achieved a very high growth rate but still depended heavily on foreign capital, technology, and trade. At the end of the Park regime, Korea had become the fourth largest debtor country in the world.

The regimes that followed the assassination of President Park, those of President Chun Doo-hwan (1980-1987) and President No Tae-woo (1987 to present), together comprise a period of "economic liberalization and political uncertainty." Anti-government activities by students, intellectuals, and workers challenged the dictatorship, after the economic and political repression of the Park regime. In 1987 political opposition to the regime coalesced into a nationwide labor uprising during July and August.

In chapter four I discuss the female labor force in Masan Free Export Zone using quantitative data gathered from 675 unmarried women and qualitative data from in-depth interviews with some of those young women. I discuss the different hiring policies of electronics factories and garment factories in the Zone. Age and educational requirements differ between electronics and garment

factories, and consequently their labor force are different. I also discuss factors that contribute to women's decisions to seek work in the Zone. I draw on my personal experience as a worker and other workers' experiences in my description of working conditions and labor control. I try to let other workers speak with their own voices as much as possible. In the final section, welfare facilities, I discuss the role of the Zone dormitory, the welfare hall, the health clinic, and other facilities in the Zone.

Chapter five presents young women's perceptions of themselves as factory workers, how they live, their dating patterns and marriage plans. I also consider those women who worked in the Zone before they got married and analyze their work histories to determine what patterns exist among workers in different industries. I use both quantitative data and extensive interviews with married women who worked in the Zone in the 1970s and the early 1980s to show why the myth of social mobility still exists among the unmarried workers.

Chapter six examines recent labor history in Korea, and delineates the underlying causes for the 1987 labor uprising. The Korean workers, who had been well disciplined and trained to be subordinate to their superiors, suddenly stood up against the government and their employers. This chapter also examines the timing of the labor uprising and the involvement of women workers in the labor movement.

I discuss the importance of labor unions to the workers in Masan, their knowledge about labor unions, and their feelings about labor unions. Did everyone want to have unions? If not, who wanted labor unions and who did not? Drawing on extensive interviews and collections of life histories, I distinguish three categories of workers and present their profiles: the first are the leaders of the movement; the second type are participants in the movement; and the third are non-participants.

My conclusion discusses the contribution made by women workers in MAFEZ to the formation of working class consciousness in Korea. I consider the implications of increased labor militancy in connection with the various objectives of women workers, labor organizers and other concerned parties. I also consider the question as to whether the Masan Free Export Zone will survive the changes brought on by increased union activity, and if it will ever provide the women working there with well paid jobs under acceptable working conditions.

Notes

1. These works along with the research conducted among electronics assembly plants in Salinas Valley (Katz and Kemnitzer 1983, 1984; Keller 1983) show how companies hire young women as assembly line workers because of their "natural" willingness to do detailed repetitious work without rebelling.
2. There were newspaper articles on labor conditions of Masan Free Export Zones, however, the number of scholarly works was very few. Exceptions are Committee for Justice and Peace of South Korea(1976), Im Young-il (1984), Korean Young Catholic Workers' Organization (1980).
3. In 1985, there were 35,000 employees in Masan (28,000 women and 7,000 men), and 4,000 employees in Iri (3,000 women and 1,000 men). There were 76 firms operating in the Masan Free Export Zone and 17 in Iri. Japanese multinationals were the main investors in both Zones: 56 firms in Masan and 10 in Iri.
4. My initial research plan included a comparison of the Japanese and the U.S. electronics factories, and how their different management affect young women workers. When I arrived in Masan, I realized that I had to abandon this part of my proposal. I had expected to find a significant number of managers and technicians from the parent companies' home countries working in Masan. However, it turned out that most of the companies had only one representative from their parent companies and that almost all middle managers were Korean males. Hence, according to one manager, 99% of the employment practices and management policies in Masan are "Korean Style".
5. Status attainment research has been concerned particularly with studies of occupational choice and social mobility. In both cases, researchers attempt to look for the factors that influence people's occupational achievement. For further discussion, see Duncan (1966), Blau and Duncan (1967), Rosenfeld (1978), Saffilios-Rothschild (1970).
6. These socialist feminists regard both patriarchy and capital as autonomous and interacting influences in society. They dissociate themselves from the early Marxist Feminists who consider women's problems as constructed specifically by capitalism. These early Marxist Feminists include Benston (1973), Mitchell (1971), Rowbotham (1973), Sacks (1975),

Zaretsky (1976). For a fine discussion of these different feminist thoughts, see Sokoloff (1980).

7. In practice women were often able to manipulate specific situations in order to limit the effects of their legal and moral subordination (see Brandt 1971, Kendall 1985b, Sorenson 1988).

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

A. Issues in Studying One's Own Culture

Anthropology developed as the study of other people in other cultures. In its initial phases, anthropology was characterized by Western scholars studying non-Western subjects, producing a distinctively Western academic product. Since the sixties when the independence of new nations opened the discipline to students from other parts of the world who go back to their own countries to do fieldwork the discourse has been broadened. In this chapter I will discuss the issues involved in studying one's own culture based on my experience of going back to my country to study my own people.

A researcher has certain advantages in studying his/her own culture. First, he/she can understand it more easily than a foreigner with only one or two years of fieldwork could. Second, because the researcher is using his/her own language, he/she can understand the more subtle meanings of words better than a foreigner. Third, the field site is not totally a strange place, and the researcher does not need a long period of getting acquainted with the field site.

Nonetheless, with all these advantages, there are also distinctive disadvantages in studying one's own culture. First, one may be choosing a convenient field site, taking an easy option. Second, a researcher may have blind spots

caused by being a native. That is, as a native, he/she may not perceive aspects of people's lives which are apparent to outsiders. Third, being a native may cause uneasy relations with subjects. A researcher may find it difficult to combine the pursuit of information with consideration for the subjects' feelings. Finally, people can be more forgiving of foreigners, because they consider foreigners ignorant of their culture and make allowances.

There still may be wide gaps between a researcher and his/her subjects, even if they share the same nationality. Although a few studies of elites and powerful people have been carried out recently, most anthropologists have studied "marginal" people who are powerless. Despite the fact that most students are not much better off financially than their subjects, there is usually a class difference. This class barrier can be disregarded more easily if a foreigner is doing the research, but becomes an acute issue for the native anthropologist. No matter how much anthropologists try to be like their subjects, they are always different.¹

Although I was a native Korean doing research in my own country, I was a stranger to the women workers who were my subjects. Despite the familiar setting, I felt as much a stranger to the people I wanted to study, as any foreign student would have felt among his/her research subjects. Factors such as age, sex, class, ethnicity, and nationality are important denominators to mark people's identity and

they split people into categories. In my case, my education and family class background were the most distinctive factors which affected my relationship with the workers.

I was constantly asked why I was doing fieldwork among factory workers--what could I want to know about poor working women? They certainly did not know what anthropology was. Instead of trying to go into complicated explanations, I told them that I would like to find out why and how they work, what they feel about working in factories, what were their future plans, etc. I told them that because there are not many studies about them, I would like to write about them and let other people know about them too. "Will we get a raise later if you write about us?" they asked. I explained that I could not promise the raise but unless people knew more about their living and working conditions, there would be no raise at all.

Other typical questions they asked me were "Why are you working in a factory?" "Do you have to work in a factory to write a dissertation?" "What kind of dissertation are you writing?" "I never heard of anyone who had to work in order to write a dissertation." "Do you really like to live with us? I bet that you never had to live in a room like this."

No matter what I said, I was different from them. I had had much more education than they had. For them, college education is the ultimate hope and fantasy. Beyond that, it is too much for them to comprehend. Some had heard

about people with a Master's degree and a Ph.D., but those people were too remote for them to know. Most women workers accepted my education as a fact. However, a few of them made bitter comments: "we could be like you if we had been lucky enough to be born in a rich family."

At first, I was very uncomfortable with the women workers because I was trying too hard to be like them. At the same time, I was constantly trying to draw them out. No wonder that I felt my smile was a frozen one. Even when I was talking to them, my heart was somewhere else. I screamed inwardly, "give me the information I can use for my dissertation." This tactic did not work well at all. Not only did I feel very uncomfortable, but I made them uncomfortable too. About three months after I started working, I gave up on this short-term information gathering strategy. Instead, I began to think that it would all come together somehow in the future and I tried to relax and let it follow in its own course. I started to enjoy myself better. I enjoyed going with them to the market to eat and going to church together. Slowly, I was accepted as their "older sister," who was willing to listen to their worries about their boyfriends and treat them to 25 cent ramyon (noodle) at night.²

I did not deny that I came from a middle-class family and that my parents were able to send me to college in Seoul. Nevertheless, I also stressed the fact that I

studied in the U.S. without much help from my parents. I told them about working two jobs during summer vacation--working in an office during the day and waitressing at a restaurant in the evening. This made them feel a little closer to me since I had worked hard as a waitress. They asked me how much I earned working as an office worker and a waitress. They were shocked at the amount of money I could earn doing manual labor like waitressing. In Korea, waitresses in a restaurant do not get tips at all, only a monthly wage. Tips are only received by those working as hostesses in bars, a low status job associated with prostitution. Factory workers were surprised to learn that restaurant waitresses receive tips too. I told them that I was proud to have worked as a waitress, since it helped me to pay for my education.

Studying my own culture allowed me to cross the boundaries between academic disciplines. Anthropology in complex societies tends to utilize a multi-disciplinary approach, thus studying my own culture required me to be more than an anthropologist. I had to be aware of other disciplines' approach to the issues that were important at the time of my research. My study of Korean women workers integrated topics from economics, political science, and sociology through the research methods of anthropology. I was interested in the subject primarily because of the area, especially because of its importance within Korea.

Anthropologists often study foreign cultures because of their interest in the exotic. There are issues foreign anthropologists are interested in, and there are issues native anthropologists are interested in. These sometimes overlap, but usually they are different. Korean anthropology, since its inception, has devoted itself mainly to the study of folklore. As it was in Europe, collecting and studying folklore was considered a way of reviving nationalistic consciousness (Zong 1979). It was a movement of "cultural nationalism" against Japanese colonialism in the 1920s. With Korean independence, the study of folklore flourished. As was the case in European countries, studying folklore provided a disciplinary niche for anthropology, separating it particularly from sociology (Gerholm and Hannerz 1982).

The study of kinship and social structure began to flourish in the 1960s and 1970s among anthropologists (e.g. Lee, K.K. 1975; Lee M.G. 1970). Also during the same period, the number of ethnographic studies of rural areas increased (Chun 1984; Han 1977; Lee, O.J. 1980; Lee, M.G. & Barringer 1978; Park 1984). Most American anthropologists interested in Korea, studied either kinship or religion and ritual (Brandt 1971; Janelli and Janelli 1982; Kendall 1985, 1988; Sorenson 1989). Only recently, have a few American anthropologists examined other aspects of Korean Society (e.g. Lewis 1984; Abelman 1989). As Korea has become

industrialized and urban, the past studies of rural and domestic aspects of society have become progressively more remote from the realities of contemporary Korea. The younger generation of Korean anthropologists has taken an active role in confronting these realities, and their work has become strongly focussed on specific social issues (e.g. Cho H.J. 1986; Cho O.L. 1986; Cho U. 1986; Im 1984; Park 1982).

Anthropologists, whether native or foreign, study other people. How a researcher bridges the differences in age, gender, class and ethnicity to relate as a person to her subjects is the most important issue in being an anthropologist.

B. The Field Site

The port city of Masan, located in the southeastern part of Korea, is 412km from the capital, Seoul, and 47km from the largest port city, Pusan, to the east and it is connected to these cities by major expressways. It is only 40 minutes by car to Kimhae International Airport and only one hour away from Japan, the headquarters for most of the companies investing in the Masan Free Export Zone. By 1985, the population of Masan City was 449,247, more than double what it was in 1970 when the Masan Free Export Zone was established.

It was a small fishing village, when, in 1663, it was

designated as an official place to collect local taxes. Masan remained a small quiet village until 1899 when it was forced to open up its harbor to foreign trade, initially with Japan, England, the United States and Russia. Foreign traders' efforts to take over commercial rights met with strong popular resistance, however, and Masan became a center for "constant resistance against outsider's military and commercial invasion, from the beginning of recent Korean history" (So 1983:9). It continued to be one of the most important cities in the struggle against Japanese colonization and against the post war dictatorship.

For most Korean people, Masan is best known for the demonstrations on March 15th, 1960 against the Rhee Syng-man regime which led to the April 19th Students' uprising and eventually resulted in President Rhee's resignation. Since then, Masan people have always been at the core of resistance against any dictatorship in both President Park's and President Chun's regimes. It was a radical demonstration starting in Masan and Pusan that led up to the assassination of President Park. Masan is still considered a place of volatile political activism since a large number of workers are concentrated in the planned industrial estates which have been established in the area. The recent labor uprising of 1987 will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

The Masan Free Export Zone was established in 1970 as

part of the export-oriented development plan. The Korean government hoped to use direct foreign investment to introduce high technology and develop new foreign markets. To accommodate investors, the government promulgated the Foreign Capital Inducement Law (1969) which included tax incentives, simplified administrative procedures, waivers of the free trade union organization law, and other inducements for foreign investors. In other words, the government established the MAFEZ by providing land, labor, and other incentives in exchange for foreign technology, resources, and trademarks.

Using the example of Taiwan, the Korean government set the following goals for establishing the MAFEZ: first, export promotion--Korea would earn a sizable amount of foreign exchange by exporting everything manufactured in the Zone; second, employment enlargement--since all the industries in the Zone are labor-intensive, the Zone would absorb underemployed labor from the countryside; third, technology advancement--there would be technology transfer since the Zone would accommodate mostly electronics, precision equipment, and metal industries with highly advanced technologies; fourth, community development--the Zone would promote the migration of the farming population to an urban area, would establish Masan as an industrial area, and would develop domestic industry to supply raw and subsidiary materials.

Companies operating in the Zone were allowed to repatriate the full amount originally invested and profits made from the operation. Foreign investors in the Zone were given the same access to export financing as Korean domestic industry. Once foreign investors brought in as little as \$50,000 (the minimum amount of investment to operate in the Zone), they were entitled to extensive export financing. The government also enforced regulations designed to guarantee foreign investors in the Zone a compliant and inexpensive labor force so that until the nationwide labor uprising of 1987, there were no trade unions operating in the Zone.

Initially, the Masan Free Export Zone was extremely attractive to foreign investors and by 1975 there were 101 companies operating factories there. In the late 1970s, however, the number of companies began to fall, and the decrease continued until, by 1987, there were only 76 companies operating in the zone (unpublished data provided by the Office of Administration, Masan Free Export Zone). Many of the companies which failed to survive were small and medium sized companies. In December 1978, just before an economic downturn which resulted in mass lay-offs, 33 of the 95 operating companies employed fewer than 100 workers. When a recession hit the world economy, these small companies could not survive the competition and fled, leaving a large number of employees behind without paying

overdue wages or severance pay (Korean Young Catholic Workers' Organization, 1980).

The major investors in the Masan Free Export Zone are Japanese electronics companies. Of the 23 electronics factories operating in the zone, 21 are Japanese owned. Most of the other industries are also dominated by Japanese or Japanese-Korean joint venture companies. The main industries represented in the Zone are: electronics (23 companies), metal (18 companies), precision equipment (17 companies) and garment (12 companies) (unpublished data provided by the Office of Administration, Masan Free Export Zone).

As of December 1986, the companies in the Zone employed a total of about 35,000 workers--8,000 men and 27,000 women. The electronics industry employed the largest number of women workers (over 17,000 or 65 percent of the total women employees), followed by precision equipment and the garment industry (about 3,000 or 12 percent each). The most prestigious jobs were in electronics companies, which did not accept job applications from women over 22 years old, arguing that older workers did not have the requisite manual dexterity. Women who leave jobs in the electronics industry for whatever reason are not able to return because of the age limit, and must look for jobs in either garment companies or subcontracting factories outside the Zone. The age limit was temporarily lifted in 1987 because of a labor

shortage in the zone. At that time, the companies in the zone were willing to hire older women including married women. The older workers, however, had to sign a temporary labor contract which specified that they could be laid off whenever the company wished. The labor shortage only lasted for the year of 1987, and, in 1988, most married women were the first to be laid off.

In 1987, approximately 1,850 workers were sponsored for industrial night school by their employers, since the Korean government had passed a special law in 1980, requiring companies in the Zone to allow workers to attend high school classes at night at the companies' expense. Garment factories, which employ large numbers of workers who have not completed high school have begun using night school opportunities to help recruit prospective workers.

Masan in 1987 was a busy, over-crowded, bustling city. In the morning, the endless lines of women workers were going to the MAFEZ. Some women were only 15 or 16 who come to work in order to go to school and they were more optimistic and bright looking; other women were over 26 and disillusioned by working for five to ten years without making any progress and dying to get out of the factory. Workers in the MAFEZ were either from poor farm families or from poor urban families. There were gradations of poverty, but all were poor, and struggling to support themselves and their families. Masan was a city for workers from the

region who therefore did not have to go away to Seoul or Pusan to work.

C. Being an anthropologist and a worker

I went to Korea in December 1986 and stayed until February 1988 to conduct anthropological fieldwork. I wanted to work with women factory workers in the Masan Free Export Zone, to find out about working conditions, living conditions, the workers' own perceptions about themselves as factory workers, and the interaction between supervisors and workers. As the first step in getting to know these young workers, I planned to work in a factory in the Zone.

I had an opportunity to seek employment and work at an electronics manufacturing firm in the Zone for three months. Participant observation was used as an exploratory technique. Its objective was to deepen familiarity with the nature of the operations performed by women workers, increase knowledge of production quotas, working conditions and rhythms, hiring and firing policies, and the time/resources invested by potential workers when trying to gain access to jobs. This technique was also used to initiate contacts with workers whose acquaintance was maintained in the later stages of research.

The political situation in Korea in 1986 was quite volatile: the labor movement was aligned with the student movement to oppose many policies of the military government.

The Korean government, therefore, promulgated a law under which any person who uses false documents, such as an identification card, or an educational diploma to work in factories, is liable to imprisonment for up to 2 years. The law was passed mostly to discourage college students from using false identification to get into factories to help organize workers. However, a large number of factory girls use their relatives' identification cards either because they are too young to work legally or do not meet the educational requirements (most electronics companies require high school graduation). The same law was also used by management to fire regular workers who became involved in labor unions in 1987-88.

When I returned to Korea, I no longer had an identification card so I was automatically excluded from legally getting any kind of employment. Furthermore, all the companies had an age restriction--a ceiling of 22 years old, which disqualified me by many years. I obtained a false identification card in order to apply for the job.

I had to wait almost a month before the company put out a hiring poster on the public bulletin board. When I applied, I had to take a dexterity test, counting fingers backwards. There were about 120 people who applied, and it took a whole day to finish the interviews. Three days later, the company announced that about 90 people passed the first interview. After that announcement, we had to go

through a physical examination consisting of a chest X-ray, a blood test, a urine test and an eye-sight test. They were especially concerned about the urine test (which was a pregnancy test) since the law required that women be given maternity leave and the eye-sight test since eye-sight was most abused.

A week after the physical exam, the company posted the names of approximately 70 people who passed. On the same day, the manager of the personnel department explained what we would do for the next 4 days of orientation. He distributed the labor contract forms for us to sign. There was a consent form with a clause stating that employees agreed to work overtime whenever the company needed them to. Overtime work was therefore mandatory contrary to the Labor Standard Law in Korea which states that workers must work overtime only if they volunteer to do so. During the orientation period, different speakers (all of whom were in managerial positions) talked about the history of the company, its connection with the parent company, the size of the company, all emphasizing one point -- to be proud of being a part of the company. No one said "factory," (Kongjang), it was always "company" (Hoesa). The term Hoesa implies that the job is a more respectable, middle class one. The last speaker made a point emphasizing why we should work hard; if not, the parent company would move the plant from Korea to another country. He made it quite clear

that the reason why the company stayed in Korea was that labor was still cheap and the production rate was higher than in other places.

I was assigned to a preparation line which assembled a gear for the tape recorder produced by the factory. (I never saw the completed tape recorders.) Assembly work in my line did not seem that hard at first. However, after a whole day of work, I could not move my shoulders without pain. I did not need any on-the-job training because the work did not require any skill, only good eye-sight. Besides the fact that it was boring, repetitive work, it confined the worker in one position for the whole day. We had two ten-minute breaks, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Supervisors gave us a lecture about going to the toilet too often, that we should only go during the break. There were only 10 toilets for the whole floor with over 250 workers, so during the break we had to wait in a long line. Workers in my group tried to sneak away when the supervisor was not looking. Every day during the break, there was an announcement that workers should be seated at their places 3 minutes before the bell rang. Management was continually trying to cut into the small amount of rest time which workers were allowed.

Workers at a conveyor line were in an even worse situation than where I worked; they could not even sneak away like we did. Because parts were coming down

continuously, they could not leave their seats. When workers had to go to the toilet more often during their period, they were sometimes confronted by the male supervisor with such a bold question as "why is your period changing every month?" For fear of embarrassment, they did not go to the toilet as often as they needed to. It is not surprising that women in the Zone frequently complain about bladder problems. Furthermore, workers at conveyor lines told me it was difficult to get used to the speed of the conveyor belt because managers frequently increased the speed in an effort to improve productivity.

I was assigned to a line consisting of 3 workers to produce gears for tape recorders. My job was applying grease in the hole of a gear and handing it to the second person who attached springs to the gear, and then the third person snapped gear and springs together with a press and put it in a box. Because I was new they thought that they were giving me an easy job to do, however, I could not keep up with the other two people's speed. No matter how hard I worked, they always seemed to finish faster than I did. Some people told me that I was doing okay for a first timer, but others complained that my speed was not fast enough. It seemed to me, at the time, that their part was easier than mine. I asked the other two whether I could try out their part. They laughed, but, they let me do it for a while and it was not as easy as I thought. They were fast because

they were used to it and they were fast workers.

While I was working at the factory, I earned only four dollars a day for 8 hours of work. In Korea, Saturday is considered a full working day, so workers are only scheduled to have Sundays off. Factories, however, often require overtime work on Sundays. Since the wages are so low, workers usually welcome two hours-overtime per day. Without some overtime work, they could not support themselves.

Workers are paid once a month. The wages are divided into two parts: a basic wage, and a set of allowances (e.g. an annual allowance, a weekly allowance, a monthly allowance, a monthly physiologic allowance, a food expense allowance, a transportation allowance, an overtime work allowance, a night-work allowance), which comprise about one third of the amount actually paid to workers. The process of getting paid these allowances is very complicated, and these allowances are not paid in full unless workers have a perfect attendance record. Under this wage system, if workers are absent from work due to sickness or emergency, they lose more than one day's wage because of deductions made to the allowances. Workers are not given any sick leave. Hence, they try to come to work even when they are sick. They cannot afford to be absent under this daily wage system.

Rent in the city is quite high. A room with a small kitchen cost between \$50-\$70 per month depending on the

area. Even with overtime, factory workers cannot afford to live alone. For the 3 months I worked at the factory, my usual day started at 7:00 o'clock in the morning. Since I rented a room within walking distance from the Zone, I did not have to get up as early as most workers. I was afraid that someone would find out about my identity, so I took a room alone for the first 3 months. Later, I shared a room with 3 other women. The room was so small that when we lay down, there was no room to move. We paid \$50 a month for that room plus \$10 for electricity and water.

We were paid for overtime work (one and a half times the regular pay), but no one wanted to work 12 hours a day for 7 days a week. Everyone wanted one day off. During the time I was at the factory, we had three weeks in a row without any Sundays off. All the workers looked exhausted and sick--our faces were pale from lack of sleep. Everyone wished for a chance to sleep late even for one day. Physical exhaustion caused industrial accidents in our factory. I saw one worker accidentally crush her finger under a heavy pressure machine. The supervisor was angry at her, calling her a "stupid woman." Although she was required to report the accident, he persuaded her not to do so, since these accident reports could be damaging to his chances for advancement. Instead, he told her to tell the doctor that the accident happened at her home not at the factory, and he gave her some money to go to a pharmacy.

Out of fear of losing her job, she complied without complaining.

During my first week of work, the male supervisor (Bang) did not put me on an overtime list since I was new and getting used to the line work. After the first week, however, he put me on a 4-hour overtime list without a period of working 2-hours overtime. On the first night of overtime work, we finished at 9:40 pm without having had any break since 3:00pm. My back was hurting, and even with my glasses, I suffered from eye strain and constantly cried. Coming home, I kept wondering why I was doing this to prove what to whom.

Everyone complained about overtime work a lot. However, most workers did not complain about 2-hours overtime at all. They complained when they had to work 4-hours overtime and when they had to work on Sundays. I could not understand why management could not plan and let us know about the overtime schedule in advance. Actually, in this way management controlled those women's lives almost entirely. Management always announced overtime in the afternoon around 3 o'clock. Even though workers assumed that we had to work extra during weekdays, it was known that there was no overtime on Saturdays. One Saturday afternoon, the supervisor came over to us and said that everyone had to work an extra two hours that day. There were complaints, cries, all sorts of protest among workers. Surprisingly,

however, almost all of them stayed on and worked. Only a few left. A lot complained about not being able to keep their appointments, many rushed to a public telephone. I asked them why everyone did not just pack up and leave and teach management a lesson. "Oh, no, we can't do that," was the typical response I got. Some workers, who did not have dates, did not mind working. Thus, organizing a walk-out seemed impossible at that time.

Nevertheless, some workers did walk out on that day, and they were severely reprimanded by the manager the next day. There was a strange hostility toward those workers who walked out. Most workers either did not have the courage to walk out or did not feel it was right to do that. It was easier for them to direct their hostility toward their peers instead of management. I became a victim of this hostile treatment one day when I asked to be relieved from overtime work since I felt quite sick. When the bell rang at 5:30pm, I started to get ready to go home. One worker looked at me angrily, and said "Why aren't you working overtime when everyone else has to? Some people can get off so easily, it is not fair." I think that I was just an easy target since I was the new one and they did not know me well enough to feel camaraderie towards me. That incident, however, made me feel so terrible that I decided not to ask the line leader to relieve me from overtime work again.

Workers became angry if they suspected that some

workers were receiving special treatment. An example of this was a woman who was openly having an affair with the line-leader. Women complained that she got off from the overtime work without any problem and others gossiped behind her back.

She left her job in order to get married to a low-rank government officer. After her wedding, she moved to the rural area where her husband worked, but she continued to call the line-leader and even came to visit him once. Everyone was appalled by her behavior. They said that it was one thing to have an affair with a married man while you were single, but it was totally different matter to continue that affair after marriage. Surprisingly, the target of condemnation was always the woman, not the line-leader. I even heard him boast that he was the first man for her so that she would never forget him for the rest of her life.

Management relied on workers' attitudes to enforce work discipline. One woman was excused from overtime work for 2 years because she was attending night college. She boasted that she would quit her job as soon as she got her diploma, but she was too old to get an office job after her graduation, so she was still stuck on the production line. She was frustrated, and angry at the system which she could not break. She constantly got off from overtime work and did not come to work at all sometimes. Others hated her for that, and talked about her a lot behind her back. She was

unhappy about her situation, and felt humiliated by other workers talking about her. Eventually she quit her job, although she did not have any better prospects.

When I first started to work in a factory, the first thing other workers asked me was how old I was. In Korea, the term "older or younger sister" is used a lot among women friends. A woman will be called "older sister," even if she is only one year older than the person speaking. This system is used to form a closely knit friendship network among factory workers. Although I knew about it, I was not quite prepared for what I had to face on the shop floor.

The first trouble I got into happened during the orientation period. Although not many women knew each other except the one or two friends they came with when applying for the job, they all seemed to mix well except for myself. I was too self conscious to initiate a conversation with anyone, and consequently, I was always alone going to the cafeteria for lunch. One day during orientation, a woman came over to me and immediately asked how old I was and how I got the job. She said that she was 24 which was older than the ceiling age, but she got a job because she knew a person in the personnel department. She called me "older sister" even without asking my age, assuming that I was older than she was. I was quite horrified since I thought that she looked older than I. I could not make up my mind what age to tell her. I smiled and said that I was about

the same age as she was. I thought that she would believe me and leave me alone, but she was persistent and kept asking how old I was. Luckily, the orientation session started again and she went to her seat. Next day, I tried to have a seat as far as possible from where she sat. Despite my wish to get away from her, we were assigned to the same section, but a different line.

I had had to lie about my age to be hired, but I had not decided what age I should tell the workers to pass their scrutiny. The ID card that I was using gave my age as 20, but I could not tell them that since I really did not look like a 20 year old. So I said that I was 23 and I thought that I fooled them. As soon as I told them my age, the hierarchy was set up; who could talk to me as friends, as seniors, and as juniors. Unfortunately, I heard some workers talking about me and they were speculating that I was older than 23. Because I was afraid of getting caught telling a lie, I told one of them that I was actually 26 years old, but because of the age limit to get into the factory, I had lied. They understood immediately since some used their sisters' ID card to get jobs before they were 18. After my supposedly true age was divulged, there was a shuffle to rearrange the system. The next thing they asked me was why I came to work when it was time for me to get married. I murmured that it was because I wanted to pay for my siblings' education, and that was that, nobody asked any

more. They all understood the need to work.

When I started to work, I had a hair cut so that I would look younger and I did not have any make-up on. About a week later a worker came over to me and advised me to put on some make-up. After all, she said "We are not that young, so we need to use some make-up and you may need to have a permanent. Your straight hair is for a 20-year-old, but not for us." She was 25 years old and thought everyone who was over 23 should have a permanent.

When I was about to quit after working for 3 months, I told the line leader that my health was not so good that I had to look for another job. He did not want to lose workers, since it was a bad reflection on his record, so he suggested that I would not have to work overtime for a while if I did not feel good. Other workers, not knowing the reason why I had to quit, said that they were worried about me because at my age they thought that I would not be able to get another factory job, or even to come back later. One worker specifically told me that I should give it at least a 6 months try, to be able to adjust to the working condition. I really felt bad about deceiving her but I could not tell anyone the truth at that time. She bought me a cup of coffee on the day I quit which made me feel like crying. Most of the workers found out about me after I quit, through a number of workers who had become my friends while I worked. Some of them were angry at me. I could not blame

them for that, and some were overwhelmed by the fact that I worked for 3 months in a factory in order to write a dissertation. Some even thought that I was a North Korean spy since I contacted them individually and had lengthy interviews with them about their personal lives.

My short experience as a worker made me think twice about writing about them. My initial hope of being an advocate seemed impossible when I felt powerless to do anything for them. Sometimes I felt that I should give up my academic career and become an activist. Sometimes I felt that I should just continue to be a worker. Neither seemed plausible and I decided to come back to the U.S. to write about them. I thought that my role as a researcher and as an organizer could be joined if I worked in that direction.

D. Data Collection Process

1. Questionnaires

I followed the initial phase of factory work by a survey questionnaire. My first questionnaire was 7 pages long and consisted of questions relating to demographic background, work history, working conditions, and living conditions. Since it was going to be impossible to get management to allow me to do the survey in the factories, I wanted to get permission from the Zone administrative office to do the survey in the MAFEZ Dormitory. I went to see the person in charge of the dormitory and introduced myself as a

researcher who was interested in doing a research survey among the dormitory residents. Several times I showed him the questionnaire and asked for his help. Each time he would not say either yes or no. He just said that research done about the Zone had been biased against official policies. Furthermore, he said that people had already made up their minds and looked at these workers in a skewed way. Thus, he did not think that it was a good idea to let me do the survey.

Faced with his negative attitude, I had to come up with a different way of administering them. Since newspaper reporters were considered influential, I called the reporter who covered the Zone for the Kyung-nam daily newspaper and made an appointment to see him. When we met, I explained who I was and what I wanted to do. He regarded my project favorably when he realized that I was going to stay there over a year and do anthropological research. He had interviewed workers to write articles before. Those, however, were always hand-picked by either management or the dormitory administration and he could only interview them once. Thus, he could not get to know them at all and the workers just gave standard responses to his questions. They never divulged their true feelings to him because of his gender and because he was a reporter brought in by people in a position of authority. Thus, he agreed to help me and brought me back to the same person in charge of the MAFEZ

Dormitory. This time he reluctantly directed me to the matron at the dormitory.

Ms. Chang was a 58 years old single woman who had been the matron since the establishment of the dormitory. She was very rigid at our first meeting and asked me a lot of questions about myself. After two hours of grilling, she finally told me that she had received instructions from her boss to interview me and then to tell me that I would not be allowed to survey the dormitory. Her boss could not say no to me because of his relationship with the reporter, thus, he gave her the responsibility of refusing me. Nevertheless, her sympathy toward me prompted her to look over my questionnaire, after which she explained that while it was impossible for her to give me permission to use that one since it contained too many sensitive questions about working condition and labor processes, she would consider allowing me to carry out my project using a shorter, less controversial, questionnaire.

I already had reservations about the longer one having conducted a pilot study with it among 20 workers. I found that it was too long and too complicated. They lost interest after two pages and some of them were hesitant to answer certain questions. On the basis of these experiences and faced with Matron's reluctant attitude, I decided to cut down my questionnaire drastically. At this point, I realized that I would have to obtain my qualitative

information from personal interviews. I needed quantitative data, however, so I reorganized my original questionnaire into very basic questions, and cut it to three pages, so that it would take only 15-20 minutes to finish. These provided me with information about the workers' basic demographic background.

Ms. Chang agreed to let me administer the questionnaire. Our friendship developed from there, and we became close during my stay in Masan. I visited her often before, during, and after the survey. Not long before I left she agreed to do an interview with me. She was a living witness for the Zone.

I distributed about 250 questionnaires among workers who resided in the MAFEZ Dormitory. There were 2,000 workers residing in the dormitory, nearly 10% of the total female labor force (25,259 women as of 1986). I also distributed 200 questionnaires at two major industrial high schools where most of the students worked in the Zone during the day. The rest of the questionnaires were distributed at various factories through a network of friends and acquaintances without the consent of the management.

I collected questionnaires from 675 women working in 25 different assembly plants. I was unable to administer my questionnaire to a truly random samples. Nevertheless, I was able to administer the survey to a wide variety of workers in various industries. Of these, 515 were

electronics workers, 119 were garment workers, and 41 were working in other industries. My sample slightly over represents workers in both electronics and garment industries compared to the actual numbers employed in the zone (see above). The workers in my sample were all young women--80 % were between 18 and 23 years old. 70% of them came from South Kyungsang province, where Masan is located.

Young women workers were easier to locate and were more cooperative about answering questions. Collecting data from married women was a more difficult task. I managed to collect 105 questionnaires from married women who worked or had worked in the zone. This was not easy, since I could not conduct surveys at work places and married women were residentially dispersed. Furthermore, married women did not want to spend their precious free time filling out questionnaires. My roommate suggested that I should give them a token present for completing questionnaires. I could not give anything expensive, so I decided to buy facial soaps, which were about 20 cents each, and gift-wrapped them individually. I could hardly believe the result when some of my friends who were distributing the survey told me that some women actually came to them asking for a soap and a questionnaire. The presents I gave were really nothing, but it gave these women a feeling that they were not wasting their time.

About half of married women's questionnaires were

administered directly by me and the other half were self-administered. Of these women, 25 were former electronics workers; 60 were former garment workers; and 20 were from other industries. Again, garment workers are slightly over represented.

2. In-depth interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews, and collected life histories from 60 unmarried women and 20 married women in order to obtain detailed information about their lives and work experiences. These interviews were conducted with women who were willing to participate in the research on a voluntary basis. Most were conducted in my room, but some were in their own rooms, or in their houses if they lived with their parents or were married.

Before I conducted interviews, I went to visit the workers or had them come over to our room so we could get to know each other, and so they would feel comfortable with me. When I went to interview married women I usually had to bring a mutual friend to introduce us. After the first time, I would drop by whenever I was in the neighborhood to get to know them better. My interviews were open-ended with a few structured questions. The first couple of interviews were conducted without a taperecorder since most women were very uncomfortable about being recorded. I tried to take notes during the interviews and to write it out in the evening, but sometimes I did not have time to write it down

on the same day and later it was difficult to remember the content of individual interviews. Therefore I began to explain my dilemma and asked for permission to use a taperecorder. Then I usually had to talk as much as they did in order to keep the conversation going.

I began my interviews by asking them questions about their basic demographic background again, information they had already given me on the questionnaires and continued from there. It was a bit awkward for me at first, but later I became more relaxed and could help them feel relaxed. The rest of the interviews and life histories were recorded. Most of my qualitative data come from these.

I could not systematically question any factory managers. Nobody was willing even to meet me. Hence, this study lacks detailed information about how managerial people feel about workers and the Zone. However, I had the opportunity to observe their behavior on the shop floor; I use those first hand observations of management attitudes for this study.

I also asked several workers to record their daily expenses. These expenditure records were incorporated into this study to show how women survive with the salary they make. I recorded the expenditures of my own household to compare with other workers'. The expenses and savings of workers are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

3. Participant-observation

At the end of May, 1987, I was quite frustrated with my project which did not progress as I had expected. I had completed my survey among the dormitory residents by then but I did not know where to go to meet women for in-depth interviews other than the few friends I'd met where I worked. Almost in a panic, I went to see Ms. Lee, a coordinator at the Catholic Women's Center. I had met her once previously, through a sociology professor at the Kyungnam University. When I explained my problem, she agreed to allow me to participate in the Center's discussion groups. The Young Catholic Workers' Organization had a number of discussion teams, usually consisting of four to five workers each. They sometimes named their groups for flowers: Lily, Daffodil and others. A typical meeting started with the question, "Who am I?" In answer, everyone took turns introducing herself, beginning with her birthday and including a brief life history. From there, they discussed a prepared topic, and then talked about working conditions in their factories and how to improve them.

The first time I participated in their discussion, they were reading a history book written for the Min-jung (common people or masses). Young historians are starting to write Korean history with a bottom up approach in contrast to the existing histories which were mostly written from an elite perspective. Also, there are several new history books

being written for the general public. The book under consideration was one of these "easy reading" Korean histories. After the book discussion they took turns talking about their work situations. One woman was at the same factory where I had worked and three were at garment factories. I will talk about the Young Catholic Workers' Organization in more detail in Chapter 6. I met Soon-ja, my main informant, and a close friend, at one of their small-group discussions.

Unfortunately for Soon-ja--though opportune for me--her factory had gone bankrupt shortly before I met her so she was out of work. She was 26 years old and had come from Seoul 4 years ago. Soon-ja was sharing a room with Kyung-ja (20) and Young-ja (19) at the time of my interview. Since she seemed to be the one who was the decision-maker, I asked her whether it was possible for me to live with them. She agreed, and asked the other two. Kyung-ja consented without hesitation and Young-ja agreed after pointing out that the room was very small. I agreed to pay the same monthly share for rent, utilities, and food that they did, which was 30,000 won (\$37). And so I started to live with them. I lived with them for the rest of my research period, which enabled me to participate in their every day activities and resulted in many hours of conversation. We moved twice after I joined them. The first room was located in Buk Masan, which was traditionally a poor area. It took about

30 minutes to walk, or 15 minutes by bus to the Zone. However, riding a bus at 7:30 in the morning was impossible. Too many workers were living in the area and the bus often did not even stop. The house where we lived was owned by a working couple with 3 children. It was a traditional Korean house converted to accommodate 4 separate households. The owners rented out 3 rooms each equipped with a separate kitchen, while the couple and their three children occupied two rooms. The children's room was merely an extension of the toilet. The kitchen in our room hardly deserved the name, it was so small. We used an oil stove for cooking and I contributed an electric rice-cooker. We took turns cooking, washing, and cleaning the room. Whoever was in charge of cooking had to get up at 6:00 to cook breakfast, which was usually just rice, soup, and kimchi. Sometimes, we ate eggs and other vegetables, but meat was a luxury we had only right after payday. Whenever one of us went to visit her family, we usually brought kimchi from home. I was surprised to find out that they often did not eat dinner. When I asked them why, I received an unconvincing answer: either they ate outside, or they were worried about getting fat. I knew that they did not have enough money to eat outside. Later I found out that they could not even afford to eat dinner (see chapters 4 & 5 for details about how workers budgeted their income). They kept telling me that they ate a lot for lunch. I learned that they were not

the only ones who did not eat dinner, that this was relatively common among young women factory workers. My observations and conversations about workers' lives are incorporated into this study.

During the months of July and August, 1987, I participated in the workers' demonstrations within the Zone. This opportunity made it possible for me to observe the interactions among workers during a period of crisis. Different strikes have been analyzed and incorporated into my research as case studies. Several female trade union leaders of, both successful and unsuccessful unions, were interviewed, primarily about the motivation for their involvement in trade unionism.

I would like to conclude by examining the role of the anthropologist as advocate (or activist). As a Korean, I am concerned about what happens to my country and people. The discipline of anthropology relies on researchers learning from first hand experience. It encourages activism by exposing researchers to situations which more exclusively academic disciplines avoid. I chose to conduct my research among women workers of Masan Free Export Zone because I had seen alarming reports about the conditions in the Zone (Committee for Justice and Peace of South Korea 1976; Im 1984). I wanted to do something about the exploitation of these workers and to help these women to publicize their struggle.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, the Korean government's tight control of these Free Export Zones made it almost impossible for scholars to carry out research during the 1970s and early 1980s. I carried out this research because there was a need for this kind of information. Because I came from Kyongsang province, I was able to arrange to get a job in factory and to fit in with workers. Working in a factory enabled me to learn first hand about the problems that workers encountered. I hope that this dissertation will help in some way to bring about the kinds of political changes that are needed to lessen their exploitation.

Notes

1. Since a person can never be exactly like another person, the feeling of "otherness" always exists in human relationships. One has to deal with "difference" all the time.

2. For further discussion on subjectivity in anthropological research, see Sidney Mintz (1989), "The Sensation of Moving, While Standing Still," American Ethnologist, 16(4): 786-796.

CHAPTER III. DEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT OR DEVELOPMENT OF DEPENDENCY: THE RECENT POLITICAL ECONOMY OF KOREA

A. Introduction

A war-devastated country in 1950, South Korea is now known for its spectacular economic growth. From being one of the poorest countries in the world, Korea achieved the status of an upper-middle income level country by 1986 (World Bank, 1988).¹ The "Korean economic miracle" has become a model case emulated by many Third World countries. How could Korea achieve this unprecedented economic development when other Third World countries with much greater resources (e.g. Latin American countries) could not? There are many factors, domestic, international, and historical, contributing to the success of the export-oriented development strategy in Korea. Recently, the Korean economic development has become much debated topic among scholars as well as among planners to find an explanation of this "miracle."

Economic development can be defined as the "process of increasing production by developing and utilizing natural and human resources in order to enrich material well being of the people" (Cho, S. 1989:9). Nevertheless, economic development should not be seen as the outcome of a mechanical combining of factors of production, rather, it should be seen as a process which involves decisions and

actions of economic agents, including workers, business, and government. In this chapter, I examine the forces behind the "Korean economic miracle."

In order to understand the position of women workers in the Masan Free Export Zone (MAFEZ), we need to examine the background to the establishment of MAFEZ. It is necessary to consider the link between what is happening to women workers and what is going on at the national and international level to understand women workers' role in Korean economic development. For the remainder of this section, I will summarize the historical processes behind the "Korean economic miracle." I divide the history of Korean political economy into three sequential stages. First, the import substitution and U.S. aid period, from the establishment of the independent Korean government at the end of the World War II to 1960. Second, the export oriented development period, from 1961 when Park Chong-hee took over the government by military coup d'etat to 1979 when he was assassinated. The third phase, from 1980 to the present, is labeled as a period of economic liberalization and political uncertainty. At the end of the chapter, I will discuss how to assess Korean development within the framework of the development models available.

1. Population and Resources

South Korea is a small country with meager raw materials, scarce capital, and a large population. Given

this, it is almost imperative for the country to depend on the outside world to survive economically. It is even argued that "the economic dependence was predetermined by Korea's poor natural endowment" (Luedde-Neurath 1980:48). The following table gives the land area, population, and the population density.

Table 3.1

<u>Land and Population of Korea</u>		
1. Land (thousands square kilometer)	98.1	
2. Population (million)	20.2	(1949)
	41.6	(1986)
3. Population density (per square km)	205	(1949)
	423	(1986)
4. Population growth rate (% , annual)	1.2	(1986)
5. Arable area of total land (%)	21.7	

Source: World Bank (1988a)

The country with its population of 41.5 million as of 1986 (World Bank 1988a:223) is extremely deficient in land, mineral, energy, and capital resources. The total land area is about 98,500 square km. Of this, the arable land accounts for only 23 percent of total land, and climate and soil are unfavorable to agricultural production (World Bank 1988b:132). There are no significant raw materials and energy sources other than some deposits of medium grade coal, iron, and tungsten. The basic resource deficiency intensifies population pressure on the economy. The Republic of Korea's population density of 423 persons per square km (in 1986) is one of the highest in the world. The population growth rate of Korea has been falling steadily from 2.1 percent in 1975 to 1.5 percent in 1987 (World Bank

1988b:132).²

Since there are few resources to fall back on, the people developed intensive cultivation of land. Farming has been the most important traditional occupation; the people regarded agriculture as the foundation of the country. The poor resources have nurtured in the Korean people pragmatic and secular attitudes toward economic life, strong achievement motivation, and a high propensity to save. Also, cultural homogeneity facilitates mass participation in the development process. The Korean cultural tradition remains strong in modern Korea, permeating social and political structures.

Confucianism is an important aspect of Korean cultural tradition,³ and from this derive such social values as social harmony, cooperation, and the importance of education. One of the positive legacies of the Confucian tradition is its contribution to the formation of a well-educated and hard-working labor force (cf. Kim K.D. 1984). Korea's "heavy stress on moral education and discipline" is seen by many observers as a major cause of its success in industrialization (McGinn et al. 1980:228, quoted in Amsden 1989:219).

2. Geo-political Position

In its development, Korea has been faced by a situation of dependency within the international economic and political system. Korea has gone through a series of phases

of dependency: First, cultural and political dependence within the Chinese "world-empire" before the opening of the nation in 1876; then "classic dependence" during the period of the Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945; and finally, "neo-colonial dependence" following the establishment of a new republic in 1948 (Lim 1982:86)

Korea was always dominated by other nations, even if not directly colonized by them. Korea's geo-political position has made it the prey of nearby countries, such as China, Mongolia, Japan and Russia during its five thousand years of existence.⁴ Under the "big brother" guidance of China, Korea maintained secluded, closed-off policy from other countries until it was forced to open up to Japan in 1876.⁵ The "big brother-little brother" relationship between Korea and China disguised a quasi-colonial relationship, but the relationship between Korea and Japan, became overtly colonial after 1910.⁶

After World War II, Korea became an independent country as a result of the Japan's defeat. Its independence, however, was not achieved by its own people; it was rather granted as a by-product of Japan's defeat. Thus, even after independence, Korea did not have the luxury of building its own nation. The country was again divided and occupied: U.S. troops occupied the south; Soviet troops occupied the north.⁷ Korea became a political pawn among the large powerful nations of the world primarily because of its geo-

political position. The fate of the Korean people has been determined by its geo-political position.

B. Import Substitution and the U.S. Aid Period (1948-1960)

Up to the end of the Japanese occupation, Korean industry was concentrated mostly in the north. The southern part of the country was mostly farmland with some facilities for light industry, however, most of these were destroyed during the Korean War (1950-1953). From 1945 to 1960, the Korean economy was heavily dependent on U.S. foreign aid and agricultural production. Due to the geo-political position of Korea, the United States government continuously acted as a sponsor both militarily, economically, and politically. Not only has the United States maintained its armed forces in Korea, but it has also given the country massive economic and military aid to maintain economic and political stability (Cumings 1984; Lim 1982).

The transition from the occupation forces to a Korean civilian government took different paths in north and south Korea. In North Korea, the Soviet Union chose Kim Il-song as their successor and built him up quickly as leader, but the American Military Government in south took a long time before it recognized Rhee Syng-man as the leader of a government.

During the period of 1945-1950, while Japan went through a process of rapid rehabilitation under the guidance

of the American Military Government, Korea was not allowed to industrialize. It was considered risky given Korea's meager natural resources. The American Military Government in Korea placed political goals ahead of economic policy at this time.

The American Military Government started two major reforms which the First Republic continued--land reform and educational reform. The AMG first distributed government holdings formerly owned by the Japanese among Korea's tenant farmers (Kuznets 1977:31). After an intense debate on the procedure, the government announced farmland reform in 1950 and carried it out in 1954. The government adopted a policy of reforming the system of farm ownership based on the principle of "purchase with compensation" and "distribution with compensation." The government purchased the farmland from its owners and sold it to the tenant farmers. As a result of land reform, "the landlord class vanished by the end of the 1950s" (Amsden 1989:37).⁸

Educational reform expanded educational opportunities for massive numbers of Koreans providing them with basic literacy and skills by instituting compulsory elementary education and strengthening vocational education. Also, U.S. aid was a prime factor which permitted the Koreans to invest in education. This educational reform had a long-term effect on Korean people. Korea derives comparative advantages not only from abundant and cheap labor but also

from a highly skilled labor force in promoting industrialization. Korea's workforce is famous for its high labor quality.

The first Republic was launched in 1948 with Rhee Syng-man as the its president. The Rhee regime set out to establish a democratic nation with a national slogan of anti-communism. Since the government started out with little industrial base, they had to rely on foreign aid, especially U.S. aid. Between 1945 and 1948, the American Military Government brought a total amount of \$410 million in economic aid into Korea to rescue it from its urgent economic situation, with much emphasis on relief supplies (Cole 1980:9). Again, between 1946 and 1952, Korea received \$269 million in economic and military aid from the U.S. The U.S. assistance, however, was directed toward military build-up and consumer goods rather than on building up industries (Mason et al., 1980:182).

During the 12 years of the Rhee regime, the government followed an import-substitution policy. This strategy emphasized the local production of consumer non-durable (of textiles and foods).⁹ It was not, however, implemented by a deliberate state strategy of capital accumulation.¹⁰ Economic development was a second priority under the Rhee regime, after the reunification of the nation. Under this goal, it had specific objectives in reconstruction, defense, and maintenance of minimum consumption through the

maximization of foreign aid (Cole and Lyman 1971:167). During the 1950s, U.S. aid, estimated at about \$2.5 billion provided a major source for the financing of industrialization. From 1953 to 1962, it accounted for nearly 80% of Gross Domestic Capital Formation and contributed 8% of GNP (Mason et al., 1980:185).

The American Military Government and subsequently the Korean government took over Japanese-owned properties and enterprises as "enemy properties" after Liberation. These properties and enterprises were sold to Korean businessmen during the 1950s. Those who obtained the enemy properties reaped windfall profits because those properties were sold at much less than their true value. "Political connections led to an uneven distribution of the spoils" (Amsden 1989:39) to those who had connections with the power elite of the government. The class of important businessmen that emerged during this period has continued to dominate Korean business. This emerging Korean bourgeoisie accumulated capital by manufacturing consumer goods with governmental assistance. The symbiotic relationship that developed between industrialists and the government in Korea led to the formation of diversified business groups (chaebol) during this period.¹¹

Although started as a constitutional representative government, the Rhee regime became authoritarian in the course of its 12 years in power. From a strong, charismatic

leader, Rhee Syng-man developed into a dictator who amended the constitution three times in order to keep the presidency. The Rhee regime, however, preserved freedom of press, freedom of speech, and freedom of organizing.

The 12-year dictatorship was forced to come to an end by the April 19th student revolution in 1960. The unstable economy, chronic unemployment, and political upheaval (specifically the rigged March 15th election) engendered the student revolution. After the sacrifice of a lot of students and other citizens, Rhee was forced to resign from the presidency. The April 19th student revolution is important in Korean history because students have been in the forefront of the anti-government movement from then on.¹²

The democratic drive led to the birth of the Second Republic with Chang Myon as the head, but the Second Republic did not last long enough to achieve any significant economic or political progress. While the Second Republic was a democratic regime, it was too weak to lead the economically weakened and politically divided nation at the time. Furthermore, the government could not operate successfully since it did not receive any solid support from either the elite group or the masses. The Chang regime was too weak to mobilize resources and manpower necessary for industrialization. Thus, the Second Republic was unable to put any kind of economic plans into effect; although they

formulated a Five-Year Economic Plan, they did not last long enough to administer it.

There was no conspicuous economic growth or structural change during this period. The volume of trade was very small and the significance of exports and imports was almost negligible. Industrial growth was mostly produced by the increased out-put in the manufacturing sector of consumer non-durable for import substitution. Without the U.S. aid, the Korean economy would not have survived the 1950s.

C. Outward-looking Development (1961-1979)

At the end of the 1950s, the economy was in a grim situation. The economic aid from the U.S. that had supported the Korean economy was decreasing. As the American aid decreased, the investment rate tended to fall with a commensurate fall in the rate of economic growth and a rise in the rate of unemployment. Depending entirely on US aid, the Korean economy was losing the sense of direction.

When Park Chung-hee took over the government in 1961, he declared that his government would pull the nation out of the vicious circle of poverty. His policy from the inception of the Third Republic was one of "economic development foremost." He asked for the people to support a development plan to build a nation without hungry people. The basic five guiding principles for the future economic

policies were:

- 1) Economic development in Korea should be achieved through industrialization. While, at the initial stage, light industries should have top priority, later the industrial structure should be deepened gradually by introducing heavy and chemical industries.
- 2) Economic development should be achieved under governmental control and leadership. The government should determine the direction of policies based upon economic development plan. The goals of economic development plan should be achieved partly through price mechanism and partly through governmental investment and financing. The government can employ other means than price mechanism for the purpose of promoting particular industries.
- 3) Although in principle firms should be owned and managed privately, the government could complement or replace private decisions in case of major investments.
- 4) In order to finance investments required in economic development, foreign capital should be induced. For the purpose of increasing employment and repaying foreign debts, increase in exports should have a top priority among economic policies.
- 5) For economic development, economic growth should have a higher priority than income and wealth distribution and balanced growth between industries and between regions. Some inflation should be tolerated (Cho S. 1989 ch.2:24, also Kuznets 1977).

All Korean governments since the 1950s have based their plans for economic development on a policy of industrialization, but these plans have varied in the means and methods.

The Park government established new institutions in order to implement its development plan. In 1961 the government set up the Economic Planning Board headed by the Deputy Prime Minister to oversee government economic policy. The Bank of Korea was also placed under government control

by a revision of the Bank of Korea Law. The government also nationalized the commercial banks which allowed it a greater role in investment decisions (Amsden 1989:73).¹³

The Korean government launched its First Five-Year Plan in 1962, but it was faced with a lack of the capital to mobilize the Plan. The U.S. government's aid which comprised the main portion of the industrial capital in the 1950s declined precipitously in the 1960s and the Korean government had to seek other sources of capital. At the same time, the U.S. government tried to detach itself from Korea, and to persuade both Japan and Korea to normalize their relationship in order to stabilize the economic and political situation in Northeast Asia. Japan had already achieved a high level of industrialization and accumulated enough surplus capital to invest in other countries. These political and economic conditions pushed the Korean government to agree to normalization with Japan in 1965.

The treaty normalizing relations with Japan was very unpopular. Furthermore, it allowed large amounts of Japanese capital to flow into Korea and resulted in the Korean economy again becoming dependent on Japan. Negotiation for normalization began during the Rhee regime, however, they did not come to an agreement because of the extent of the Korean government's demands.¹⁴ During the Third Republic, the demands were reduced drastically and the Korean government pushed for a normalization agreement

mostly so it could obtain the capital it needed for its economic plan. In effect, normalization transferred control of Korea from the U.S. government to Japan.

With the Japanese compensation capital and loans, the Korean government actually was able to accomplish the economic growth it planned. The Park regime emphasized economic development as its foremost task and launched a policy of export-oriented development. Under the Park regime economic policy was based on a capitalist free market system with a strong role for the state as steward, i.e. state guided capitalism.

Table 3.2: Foreign Loans & Investments by Country,
1962-79 (million U.S. \$ at current prices)

	Loans		Direct Investment(%)			
	Public	(%)	Commercial(%)			
U.S.A.	1,687	(28.8)	2,291	(24.5)	222	(20.7)
Japan	929	(15.9)	2,148	(22.9)	588	(54.8)
International Financial Institutions (IBRD, IDA, IFC, ADB, etc.)	2,427	(41.5)	81	(0.9)	--	
EEC	506	(8.7)	2,843	(30.4)	146	(13.6)
Others (Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, etc)	300	(5.1)	2,004	(21.4)	117	(10.9)
Total	5,849	(100.0)	9,307	(99.9)	1,073	(100.0)

Source: Lim (1982:123)

After the resumption of diplomatic ties with Japan, the U.S. and Japan were the two dominant economic forces for Korea. During the phase of outward-looking development, these countries were the principal capital suppliers for and trading partners with Korea. Together they provided 48.5%

of the total capital inflow between 1962 and 1979 (see table 3.2). The U.S. and Japan accounted for more than half of Korea's exports and imports between 1962 and 1979 (Lim 1982:122). The security commitments from the U.S. and Japan also produced a favorable investment climate in Korea for international financial institutions and other countries.

Korean business was an integral part of the government's export-oriented growth policy. The government favored a small number of conglomerates at the expense of medium and small industries which were allowed to stagnate. Since industries depended on the government's guarantee to obtain foreign loans, conglomerates became even more dependent on the government (Jones and Sakong 1980; Johnson 1987: 136-64). During the Third Republic, large companies were created or destroyed at the whim of the government.

During the First and the Second Five-Year Plan, the government did not pay much attention to the rural areas because it was busy with urban industrialization. In order to gain a comparative advantage in the world market, Korea had to produce export goods cheaply compared to other countries. Producing these goods required paying low wages to workers who were producing them. In order to keep the wages low enough, the government had to limit the price of agricultural products, especially rice. Farmers became impoverished during the 1960s because of the low prices set by the government for rice. Thus, radical economists argue

that farmers subsidized the government's export policy during the 1960s (Kim, Phyllis 1980).¹⁵ Young men and women were forced to leave farming areas for urban areas in order to find jobs. Industrialists took advantage of a supply of labor pushed out of the farming sector and therefore available to the industrial sector (Choi 1983:75-76). The flood of unskilled labor drove wages down in the cities.

There was a dramatic decline in rural population after 1960, associated with the collapse of farming. The impact was greatest among the poorest farmers. The gains made by larger farmers could not offset the loss of farming jobs among poor farmers and consequently poor farmers were forced to migrate to the urban centers (Choi 1983:79). Rural outmigration between 1962 and 1977 reached over 7 million, an annual rate of 470 thousand people/year (P. Kim 1980:4). These young rural migrants entered manufacturing occupations, especially low-skilled jobs in the export sector. The Korean working class is, therefore, a labor force mostly composed of first generation workers.

Women migrating from the countryside formed an important part of this urban working class as they began to be employed in the manufacturing sector. Export industries started to hire women because they needed cheap, unskilled labor for assembly line work. During the 1960s and 1970s, the number of women workers in the manufacturing sector increased steadily.

Table 3.3: Gender Composition in Manufacturing Employment

Types of Manufacturing Industries	1966(a)			1978(b)		
	Employment	M(%)	F(%)	Employment	M(%)	F(%)
Food & Beverage	146,530	77.4	22.6	134,529	57.4	42.6
Textiles & Wearing	364,220	35.2	64.8	616,448	27.6	72.4
Chemicals (Rubber footwear)	143,340 (20,950)	84.3 (62.5)	15.7 (37.5)	324,051 (98,801)	65.0 (47.6)	35.0 (52.4)
Metal & Machinery (Electronics)	161,350 (18,400)	94.8 (82.4)	5.2 (17.6)	626,305 (211,380)	71.2 (44.8)	28.8 (55.2)
Other Man.	142,590	84.9	15.1	311,380	58.3	42.7
Total employed	958,030	66.4	33.6	2,012,713	53.9	46.1

Sources: (a) The EPB, Korea Statistical Yearbook 1967:179
 (b) The ALA, Yearbook of Labor Statistics, 1974: 48-50
 cited in Choi 1983: 82.

Between 1966 and 1978 female participation in the manufacturing labor force increased from 33.6% to 46.1% as shown in Table 3.3. The growing number of women involved in manufacturing has been an integral component of Korea's industrial accomplishment. Female workers have been most important in the labor intensive manufacturing industries which produced most of Korea's export goods. By 1978 female workers comprised more than half of the work force in electronics (55.2%), textiles (72.4%) and rubber footwear (52.4%). These three industries accounted for 45% of Korea's total exports in 1979 (Choi 1983:83-84). Most women

workers in the 60s and 70s were from rural areas, and came to work in factories in order to help their families financially. Thus, Choi (1983) points out that the increase of rural income for this period is due more to these factory workers' remittances than from any change in farm income.

Economic growth during this period was quite remarkable. The impressive record of industrialization in the sixties and seventies is summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Major Economic Indicators, 1961-79 (%)

Year	GNP Growth Rate	Industrial Origin (Current Prices)			Manufact. Share of Exports	Employment Structure		
		Agr.	Min & Man.	Soc. Ser.		Agr.	Man.	Ser.
1961	5.6	38.7	13.5	25.9	n.a.	--	--	--
1962	2.2	36.6	14.3	47.1	27.0	--	--	--
1963	9.1	43.1	14.5	40.7	51.7	63.1	8.7	28.2
1964	9.6	46.5	15.5	36.3	51.6	61.9	8.8	29.3
1965	5.8	37.6	19.9	42.5	62.3	58.6	10.4	31.0
1966	12.7	34.4	18.4	45.4	62.4	57.9	10.8	31.3
1967	6.6	30.1	18.8	49.3	70.1	55.2	12.8	32.0
1968	11.3	28.3	19.8	50.4	77.3	52.4	14.0	32.6
1969	13.8	27.6	20.1	50.9	79.0	51.3	14.3	34.4
1970	7.6	26.8	20.9	51.0	83.6	50.4	14.4	35.2
1971	9.4	27.0	21.0	50.6	87.0	48.4	14.2	37.4
1972	5.8	26.4	22.2	50.2	86.0	50.6	14.2	35.2
1973	14.9	25.0	24.8	49.0	88.2	50.0	16.3	33.7
1974	8.0	24.8	26.1	47.9	90.2	48.2	17.8	34.0
1975	7.1	24.9	26.5	47.1	88.3	45.9	19.1	35.0
1976	15.1	23.8	27.0	46.6	89.8	44.6	21.9	33.5
1977	10.3	23.0	27.6	47.4	87.5	41.8	22.4	35.8
1978	11.6	21.9	27.0	49.7	89.9	38.4	23.2	38.4
1979	6.4	20.5	25.9	51.5	90.1	35.8	23.7	40.5

Sources: Economic Planning Board (EPB), 1980a:4-12, except for column on Manufacturing's Share of Exports from EPB, 1980b:182, cited in Lim (1982:78)

Between 1961 and 1979, Korea achieved high and uninterrupted economic growth. GNP grew at an annual

average rate of 9.2%. Rapid industrialization was accompanied by a steady increase in the importance of the manufacturing sector. The contribution of manufacturing to the economy grew from 12.7% to 60.4%. The share of manufacturing in exports grew from 28.0% to 90.1%. In employment structure, the size of the labor force engaged in manufacturing nearly tripled between 1961 and 1979 (Lim 1982:80). GNP also grew as Korea benefited from the Vietnam War and the Middle East Construction boom (see, Cho, S.K. 1987).

During the Park regime, the Korean government depended heavily on foreign capital to promote export industries. In inducing foreign capital, however, the government relied more on loans than on direct investment. The government was concerned to protect local industries from direct competition with multinational firms, while it was also trying to develop export industries. The composition of the foreign investment in Korea during the Park regime illustrates this policy. Of the total of \$16.2 billion of foreign investment, the public and commercial loans (93.8%) are 15 times larger than direct investment (6.2%) (Lim 1982:132). Multinational corporations, thus, played a very small role in providing capital during the Park regime.

Choi (1983) presents three factors that increased the amount of foreign debt taken on by the Korean economy. First, even though the volume of exports had increased

greatly during the 20-year period, many exports relied heavily on imported components. In order to export, companies had to import most of parts and the value added was only the labor used to assemble these parts. Second, companies had to give kickbacks of up to 20% to government officials for the favor of obtaining foreign loans. Third, the government's policy of "export foremost" also had negative impact on domestic industries. Responding to export goals set by the government, export companies produced large quantities of goods for the world market often with little or no profit margin.

During the Park regime, workers were exploited under the banner of "development first, distribution later." They were manipulated ideologically (praised by newspapers and T.V. as the backbone of the country's economic miracle), while being exploited economically and physically. Workers eventually came to realize that they were not benefiting from the "economic miracle." They observed that only a small number of people were enjoying the fruits of the development and began to distrust the authoritarian government. The Korean people endured twenty years of dictatorship for the hope of economic betterment. It was only after the Yushin constitution, which granted Park the presidency permanently, took effect in 1972, that people started to voice their discontent.

By the end of the Park regime, Korea had become the

fourth largest debtor in the world after Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico. However much economic growth the government had achieved, it had also subjected the nation to a huge debt. Furthermore, by 1979 the economy was beginning to experience problems in sustaining its high rate of growth. The rate of economic growth was 12.7% in 1977 ahead of the plan figures, but it fell back to 6.5% in 1979, -5.2% in 1980, and 6.2% in 1981 (Amsden 1989:56). Given the heavy handed implementation of the five year plan and the government's disregard of structural imbalances that were occurring in the economy, it was impossible to sustain the previous high rate of growth.

This "economic development" had excluded workers from obtaining its benefits, so the discontent which had started among radical students, intellectuals, religious groups, spread to the workers. Economic exclusion and political repression took its toll, and there were massive demonstrations by students and workers in 1979. This radical movement began in the Pusan and Masan area and spread throughout the country. Park Chung-hee was assassinated on October 26, 1979 and his twenty-year rule came to an end. The workers' movement in the 1970s and 1980s is discussed in chapter 6 below.

D. The Economic Liberalization and The Political Uncertainty: 1980-present

The assassination of president Park plunged Korean society into a chaotic period during which time many forces struggled to establish some kind of democratic government. This period is called "Seoul Spring" because of the flexible political atmosphere which followed the assassination of President Park. Plans to elect the president directly and have a democratic government in Korea were destroyed when another general seized power, and Chun Doo-hwan became the president of the Fifth Republic.

Because his seizure of power was unpopular, the Chun regime had to exert more extreme political repression. Many politicians were placed under house-arrest and were unable to pursue political activities. Student demonstrations were met by repressive measures.¹⁶ Union activities were banned and most union leaders were sent to "purification camp" (where they were tortured). All forms of political opposition were severely restricted. Despite the extreme political uncertainty, however, the economy functioned relatively well.

The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1982-86) set a goal of 7.6% annual average growth rate, actually achieved a rate of 8.7%. The gap between imports and exports also narrowed leading to a balance in the current account. There was an increasing burden of foreign debt service during the 1980s

but this burden was significantly reduced by the phenomena of so-called "three lows"--low oil price, low exchange rate, and low international interest rate. "By 1986 the increasing volume of Korean exports led to a large current account surplus. This economic success was unique in Korean history" (Cho, S. 1989, ch.3:24).

The Sixth Five-Year Plan announced in September 1986 specified its goals as "advanced economy" and the "public welfare." This plan aims to solve socio-economic problems by adjustments within the current economic structure. It proposes to maintain the 7.3% percent annual growth rate while expanding the benefits of this growth throughout the economy. The plan appears to be deficient, however, because it does not address the real structural problems that have developed over the past thirty years of export-oriented development.

The economic factors that have given Korea a comparative advantage during the last 20 years have begun to erode. As the U.S. tries to force Korea to open its markets in imports and capital, it and other developed countries that have been the markets for Korean products are becoming more protectionist. Labor costs in Korea are also rising relative to other Third World countries and the Korean currency is being forced to appreciate.

President Chun was never popular during his seven-year presidency. After the murder of a student in police custody

in February 1987, massive demonstrations were held against Chun's government. These demonstrations initially attracted mainly students, but as Chun became more inflexible the opposition grew and demonstrations involved a broad cross section of society. On June 29th 1987, in the midst of constant anti-government demonstrations, the ruling party's presidential candidate No Tae-woo was pushed to declare his support for the direct popular election of the president. This was the opposition's principal demand. Although his declaration did not emphasize the rights of laborers, farmers, and urban poor, it provided an opening in the rigid facade of the military regime.

The ruling party's candidate, No, won the election to become president of the Sixth Republic because of the opposition's factionalism, but the two major opposition parties elected the majority of representatives in the congress. For the first time in Korean history, the opposition parties controlled the congress. Even with the amazing economic growth, Korea is still confronted with difficult political problems. Radical students actively pursue reunification through their own ways. Workers continue to strike against the unequal distribution of wealth.

E. Dependent Development or Development of Dependency?

Korea has achieved remarkable economic development

during the past thirty years while depending heavily on foreign capital, technology and trade. Between 1962 and 1987, the Korean economy grew at an average rate of 8.9% per year. Economic development has shifted "the composition of the Korean labor force from 79% engaged in the primary sector in 1961 to 70% engaged in the secondary and tertiary sectors in 1988" (Johnson, 1989:7). Korea's industrialization, however, was achieved at considerable political cost, as this same period saw the emergence and strengthening of authoritarian regimes.¹⁷ These regimes have used the need to sustain rapid economic growth to justify the exclusion of the Korean working class from the benefits of development. In Korea, rapid economic development has not been accompanied by commensurate political development.

In the Latin American dependency theorists' terminology, the position of Korea in the International economic system has moved from the periphery to the semi-periphery. The fast growing economies of Asia's newly industrializing countries, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan have attracted a great deal of theoretical debate, because their performance has been so different from their Latin American counterparts (e.g. Brazil, Argentina, Mexico).¹⁸

Dependency theorists were puzzled by these four countries' economic performances.¹⁹ However, they were not

the only ones who started to doubt the applicability of orthodox dependency theory in other Third World countries. Many Korean social scientists struggled with the term "dependency," when it became popular.²⁰ The Korean case did not seem to fit the model easily since it did not show many of the symptoms Frank discussed in his book (1969).²¹ More recent works (Cardoso 1972, 1973, 1975) and Evans (1979, 1985, 1987) have moved away from Frank's simplistic approach to a historical-structural approach to produce a more complex analysis of situations of dependence. Cardoso attacked the assumption that capitalist development was impossible in the periphery, and used the term "associated dependent development," to describe development within context of dependency. Evans introduced the triple alliance model, involving the state, multinationals and the local bourgeoisie, in his discussion of "dependent development." This model takes into account the cooperation and conflict among these three forces which have different interests, objectives, and levels of power (Evans 1979, 1987).

Is dependent development possible, and does the Korean case fit Cardoso's and Evans' dependency model? Korea, certainly, has achieved spectacular development according to economic indicators, despite its accumulation of foreign debt. The Korean economy is dependent because it is characterized by continued dependence on foreign capital, technology, and trade; and developed because it is

characterized by industrialization, capital accumulation and structural differentiation.

According to Evans, dependent development engenders "disarticulation, exclusion and repression in the social, economic, and political spheres along with the economic development" (Evans 1979:28-9). Economically, it leads to an imbalance of income distribution and falling real wages. Only a small elite benefits from the economic growth, which bypasses the majority of the population. This results in massive unemployment and underemployment, and the continuing poverty of the masses leads to their "marginalization" (Cardoso 1973).

Political exclusion follows from economic exclusion. The state allies itself with local and multinational capital around a project of capital accumulation (Evans, 1987:211), and the elite drawn from the members of the bureaucracy, and local capitalists seeks to exclude the masses from political participation. This exclusion is justified by the need to maintain the confidence of multinational capital. Political exclusion generates widespread opposition, leading the oligarchies to become increasingly repressive. "The advent of an autocratic military of authoritarian regime is an essential part of dependent development" (Lim 1982:36).

The triple alliance model (State, Multinationals, Local Bourgeoisie) proposed by Evans provides a base for understanding the Korean case. However, the Korean case has

certain features which are unlike the Latin American cases from which Evans developed his model. In particular, the alliance between the state and the local bourgeoisie is a lot stronger than in Latin America, and the role of multinationals was never as great. The Korean government has consistently protected the local bourgeoisie within the national economy. Thus, in the Korean case, they remained central to the triple alliance, rather than becoming the "stepchildren" which Evans describes for Latin America (1979). Furthermore, the state has taken a more prominent position in the Korean case than in the Latin American ones. Because of Korea's strategic position and history, its autocratic military regimes have had a relatively plausible claim to power. Korea's military regimes have used their concentration of power to force "economic development" on the country.

Korea has certainly developed under its military government, but the question remains as to who benefits from this development. The working class which made the "Korean economic miracle" possible has received little for their labor. Despite the praise which Korean workers have received as a well educated and efficient labor force, they remain severely underpaid and have perhaps the longest working hours anywhere in the world (International Labor Organization 1985).

The women workers whom I studied in Masan exemplify

this condition of low pay and long working hours. With the additional burden of a tradition emphasizing female passivity they have been in many ways the ideal labor force, characterized by low militancy and willingness to work for low wages. Nevertheless, their growing political activism indicates their frustration with "development." Their experience shows how the Korean economic miracle looks from the bottom.

NOTES

1. For example, in January The Wall Street Journal reported: "Until a few years ago, South Korea was the world's fourth largest developing-country debtor after Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. But with swelling trade surpluses, it should become a net creditor this year. Capital is pouring in to take advantage of high interest rates, an appreciating currency and strong economic growth. Indeed, the flood is forcing Seoul to control money-supply growth" (January 27, 1989). This clearly shows where Korea stands in the world economy today.
2. Factors considered to contribute to the falling population growth rate include "rapid economic growth, urbanization, a national family planning program, and increased female participation in the labor force" (Lee and Cho 1976:2).
3. "Students of Korean society have long stressed its Confucian character. American observers... are fond of saying that Koreans "out-Chinese" the Chinese in their devotion to Confucianism." (Janelli and Janelli 1982).
4. For discussions of Korean history in English see Han Woo-keun (1970), Reischauer and Fairbank (1965). Recent books that discuss Korean history from the "Minjung" perspective include Hanguk Minjungsa (1986).
5. Korea was forced to sign the Kanghwa Treaty with Japan in 1876, prior to this Korea had rigorously pursued a policy of isolation under Chinese hegemony and was known as the "hermit kingdom" of East Asia.
6. For discussions of Japanese colonialism, see Andrew C. Nahm (ed.), Korea Under Japanese Colonial Rule, (Center for Korean Studies, West Michigan University, 1973); Edward I-te Chen, "Japanese Colonialism in Korea and Formosa: a Comparison of the Systems of Political Control," Harvard Journal of Asian Studies, 30(1970):126-158; Won-mo Dong, Japanese Colonial Policy and Practice in Korea, 1910-1945, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University.
7. For a discussion of this period, see Bruce Cumings (1984), The Origins of the Korean War. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Gregory Henderson (1968), Korea: The Politics of the Vortex. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
8. The Korean government did not compensate landowners sufficiently to enable them become industrial capitalists. Thus, the land reform destroyed traditionally powerful

landlord class and technocratic and bureaucratic elites replaced them (Kim Byong-tae 1981).

9. For a discussion of the Korean economy in this period, see Krueger, The Developmental Role of the Foreign Sector and Aid; Kim and Roemer, Growth and Structural Transformation.

10. Cho (1989) argues that the Korean government had no choice: import-substitution industries was not selected over export industry. In the 1950s, the country was so weak that there was no choice to be made between import substitution and export industries. The same industry could be involved in both. If an industry started producing to meet the domestic demand, it was playing a role in import substitution, but if it later began to export it would be considered an export industry.

11. For the history of the formation of the Korean Conglomerates (Chaebol), see Jones, Leroy and Sakong, Il (1980) and Amsden (1989).

12. Sources on the April 1960 Student Revolution include: Kim, S.H., Kim, J.W. and Vicks, Herbert (1983); Hanguk Minjungsa Yongu Hoe (1986).

13. No compensation was given to private stockholders, however, "the banks were almost bankrupt" (Amsden 1989:73) at the time so stockholders did not suffer major losses.

14. Rhee Syngman had demanded \$2 billion and Chang Myon reduced it to \$1.25 billion for settlement of property claims for colonial exploitation. The Park regime decided to abandon Rhee's claims concerning Korea's territorial waters and to accept \$300 million in grants, \$200 million in public loans, and \$300 million in commercial loans, which was raised to \$500 million in 1967, over a ten year period.

15. The agricultural policy of the Park regime continued to hold down staple food prices by importing foreign grain in order to ease inflation and curb wage increases. see Park (1981), chapters 1 and 3.

16. For studies on the Korean student movement, see Wonmo Dong, "Students and Politics in South Korea," Journal of International Affairs, 40:2(1987):235-55; and "Student Activism and the Presidential Politics of 1987 in South Korea," in Ilpyong Kim (ed.), Political Change in South Korea (New York: Paragon House Press, 1988).

17. A number of authors argue that the authoritarian pattern has emerged as a distinct path for modernization in late developing countries: Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1966); Guillermo A. O'Donnell, Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

18. The whole volume of The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism (1987) edited by Frederic Deyo deals with this debate. Refer especially to articles by Stephan Haggard and Tun-jen Cheng, Bruce Cumings, and Peter Evans.

19. There are three different traditions within the dependency theory: Sunkel (1973) and Furtado (1970) are moderates who take the ECLA (the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America) structural perspective; Frank (1969, 1972b) and Dos Santos (1970) are radicals who hold the Marxist perspective; and Cardoso (1972, 1973), Faletto (1979), and Evans (1979) are middle of the roaders between the moderates and radicals (see O'Brien, 1975:11).

20. Social Scientists are still debating the applicability of the term "dependency" to Korea.

21. The effects of dependency listed by Frank (1969) are: widening of income inequality and class polarization, limitations on the autonomy of the dependent country's policy making, disintegration of the local bourgeoisie and its incorporation into international capital, deterioration of balance-of-payments, and uneven regional development and/or sectoral development.

CHAPTER IV. FEMALE LABOR FORCE IN MASAN FREE EXPORT ZONE

A. Introduction

The growth of multinational corporations since World War II has generated a massive restructuring of world-wide industrial production. Multinational corporations have created a new international division of labor, in which the production process is divided among various plants of one firm which are located in different parts of the world (Frobel et al. 1980). The new international division of labor is characterized by the exploitation of non-unionized and vulnerable female labor pools for export processing in third world countries. Preexisting sexism in these countries provides the basis for the exploitation of women workers by multinational corporations seeking the lowest labor costs (see Smith et al. 1984).

Export processing industries throughout the world depend on the labor of young, single females--16 to 25 years old (80% to 90%, according to Fuentes and Ehrenrich 1983). Using female labor in manufacturing is not a recent phenomenon. Ever since the beginning of the industrial revolution, female labor was sought by textile factories, where the work was considered as "women's work" (cf. Gutman 1977, Hareven 1982). Historians (e.g. Kessler-Harris 1981, 1982; Hareven and Langenbach 1978; Dublin 1981) have described the mix of exploitation and opportunity that

factory work provided for women as they came to participate in paid industrial labor. Unrestricted by labor legislation or regulation, the multinational corporations have recreated industrial conditions similar to, or perhaps worse, than those found in the workshops of Europe and America more than a hundred years ago (Rosen 1987:22). One researcher describes labor conditions of the export processing industry as "wages on a par with what an 11-year-old boy could earn on a paper route, and living conditions resembling what Engels found in Manchester" (Ehrenrich 1982).

In this chapter I discuss the characteristics of the female labor force in Masan Free Export Zone. The conditions found in the Zone are not unique to Korea but exemplify features of export processing zones throughout the world (cf. Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Kung 1983; Lim 1983; Ong 1983, 1987); notably the employment of young women to perform unskilled, repetitious tasks for wages that are much lower than would have to be paid in developed countries.

B. Masan Free Export Zone

The Korean government established the Masan Free Export Zone in 1970. MAFEZ in common with export processing zones throughout the world, has the following characteristics:

- a. It is a specifically designated industrial area where fully or partially foreign-owned firms can import raw materials or semi-finished goods free of duty for the

purpose of manufacturing, processing, or assembling items for export.

b. It is a bonded area where the state plays a direct role in controlling union organization so as to preclude labor disruption.

c. Within the Zone, the government supplies land, utilities, transport facilities, and buildings at subsidized rates.

d. The government offers to foreign firms operating in the Zone incentives over and above those extended to foreign or local investors outside the Zone (AMPO 1977:1; Grunwald and Flamm 1985).

Local residents had little idea about the purpose of the Zone when it first opened. One woman who worked in the Zone during early 1970s said, "When I first started to work there, I did not know what the Free Export Zone meant except that the place was for exports and mostly owned by Japanese." Many workers even today told me that they did not know what MAFEZ was before they started to work there. Some thought that it was women's school because every morning rows and rows of women walk to that area.

The industrial complex of MAFEZ consists of two sections. The first section has a land area of 803,235 square meters and the second section has a land area of 264,539 square meters. Each section contains two kinds of factory buildings: some buildings are built and owned by

the foreign companies themselves; other buildings are built by the government and made available for rental by foreign companies. As of 1987, 60 companies had their own buildings and 16 companies rented their buildings from the Zone administrative office.

With the establishment of MAFEZ, the population of Masan City increased rapidly. It more than doubled between 1970 and 1975. After that, however, the rate of growth slowed down, and grew at less than 1% a year from 1975 to 1980 while there was a hiring freeze in the Zone. The number of companies applying for facilities in the Zone decreased considerably during this time and the oil crisis caused a large cut back in employment. Between 1980 and 1985 population growth increased again to an average of 3.2% a year as the economy recovered. The Zone employs mostly young workers, so the age structure of population in Masan has also changed. "The age cohort of 15-19 comprised 31% of the total population of Masan City in 1970 and the percentage increased to 36% in 1984" (Lee, Hwang, and Lee 1987:37). Because of the rapid expansion of the population, housing became an acute problem. In 1987 much of the population was inadequately housed, and overcrowding was a serious problem.

At first, the Korean government did not carefully select companies to accommodate in the Zone. In an effort to recruit companies, the government allowed companies of

very small size (with less than US \$50,000 investment), to operate in the Zone (MAFEZ Administrative Office 1987). In 1973 less than 25% of the companies had invested more than a million dollars, however, by 1986 the investment structure had changed and 48% of the companies now had more than a million dollars investment (MAFEZ Administrative Office 1987). Most of the small companies did not survive the economic downturn in 1978 and fled MAFEZ leaving behind a large number of employees, and without paying overdue wages or severance pay (Korean Young Catholic Workers' Organization, 1980).

Table 4-1 Companies Operating in the Zone by Country

	Sole Investors		Joint Venture	Total
	Local	Foreign		
Korean	10			10
Japanese		40	16	56
U.S.		2	6	8
Other			2	2
Total	10	42	24	76

Source: MAFEZ Admin. Office, 1987 MAFEZ 15 year History

In 1987, there were 76 companies operating in the Zone. Japanese multinationals were the major investors in MAFEZ (see Table 4-1). They comprised 56 companies out of 76 operating ones in 1987. Given its geographical proximity to Japan, it was not surprising that the MAFEZ accommodated primarily Japanese firms. MAFEZ was built strictly for the foreign firms at first, but the law governing the Zone was modified in 1981 so that Korean exporters could operate

within the Zone.

The export volume of MAFEZ has increased steadily from \$856,640 in 1971 to over \$1,000,000,000 in 1987 (unpublished statistics provided by MAFEZ Administrative Office).

However, the importance of MAFEZ export to the total national export was never great. The proportion of exports from MAFEZ to the total national export increased from less than 1% in 1971 to 3.3% in 1981, but then it declined to 2.7% in 1985.

Table 4-2

Export Volume of MAFEZ to the Total National Export

(Millions of US Dollars)	1971	1977	1981	1985
A. Total Export	1,352.0	8,114.9	20,992.6	30,283.1
B. Total Manufactured Goods Export	1,162.9	7,283.1	19,507.8	28,879.6
C. MAFEZ Export	0.9	30.3	696.3	809.3
C/A (%)	0.07	0.37	3.32	2.67
C/B (%)	0.08	0.42	3.57	2.80

Source: MAFEZ Admin. Office, 1987 MAFEZ 15 year History

MAFEZ absorbed a large number of workers from Masan City and nearby farm area within Kyongsangnam Province. By the end of 1985, the employees of the Zone comprised 10.1% of the total workers in the manufacturing sector within Kyongsangnam Province (MAFEZ Administrative Office 1987). In 1985, there were 28,983 workers employed in the Zone. Women production workers numbered 22,342, while male managers and technicians comprised the 6,641. By 1988, the number of workers had increased to 38,000 including 29,000

women and 9,000 men.

C. Hiring Policies

1. Age restrictions

Young women, 16-25 years old, constitute the majority of workers in the Masan Free Export Zone. Most electronics factories only hire women who are between seventeen and twenty two years of age. They consider women in this category to have good eyesight and manual dexterity. Electronics factories try to recruit young women who are just out of high school. Workers are allowed to continue to work after they reach age twenty two or even after they get married, but most workers leave their factories upon marriage.

Women who leave jobs in the electronics industry for whatever reason are not able to return because of the age limit, and must look for jobs in either garment companies or subcontracting factories outside the Zone. Garment factories do not have a strict age limit on hiring. One 28-year-old worker told me that she quit her job at an electronics company where she had worked for 7 years because of pressure from her co-workers and management. The pressure was not a direct demand, rather it took the form of teasing, such as "When are you getting married?" or "My God, you will be here until you get to be a grandmother." She felt so insulted that she quit without thinking about a

future job. Afterwards, she had to go to work in a factory outside the Zone, where she made less money and worked longer hours. Ironically, this factory was a subcontractor of her former employer.

Many women who were either too young or too old to be hired by electronics factories used other people's ID card (usually a sister's) to apply for jobs. When I had to use a false ID card to get my job in an electronics factory, workers accepted this because they could tell that I was too old to be hired with my own identification. They were also concerned when I quit because they knew it would be almost impossible for me to get another job at an electronics factory because of my age.

Table 4-3 Age Distribution

Age	Number	%
15	3	0.4
16	20	3.0
17	45	6.7
18	82	12.1
19	94	14.0
20	111	16.4
21	98	14.5
22	98	14.5
23	63	9.3
24	40	6.0
25	17	2.5
26	3	0.5
27	1	0.2
Total	675	

Out of 675 unmarried women workers who responded to my questionnaire, over 80% were between 18-23 years. There were very few unmarried women over 25 years old in the Zone

since most got married around 25 or 26. Multinational corporations, thus, benefitted from workers' voluntary resignations, since they did not have any costs associated with seniority in their work- force. Having a constant turnover of young workers also made the workforce easier for management to control.

2. Educational level

Electronics companies had higher education requirements than garment factories (see Table 4-4). Most of the electronics factory workers who responded to my survey, had completed high school and the next largest group was currently attending high school. Garment factory workers had a lower level of education, about a third of workers only having a junior high school education (cf. Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Safa 1981).

Table 4-4 Workers by Industry and Education

	Electronics	Garment	Other	Total
Primary School	1	3	1	5
Jr. High School	12	40	2	54
Attending H. School	172	36	13	221
High School	320	39	22	381
Jr.College/College	9	1	4	14
	514	119	42	675

Most electronics companies preferred to hire only high school graduates, but the competition for workers was such that sometimes they had to lower their requirements. Garment companies had more trouble attracting high school graduates because the work was less prestigious and working

conditions were harsher. They even hired workers who did not have any education at all. One woman whom I interviewed worked for five years in a hat factory where most of the workers were either illiterate or had had only a primary school education. Very few of her co-workers had been to high school.

The Korean government passed a law in 1977 requiring companies in the Zone to allow workers to attend high school classes in the evenings at the companies' expense. In 1987, approximately 1,850 workers were sponsored by their employers to attend night school. There were six night schools that offered classes for workers: a junior high school, two regular high schools and two commercial high schools for women and a technical high school for men.

Garment factories which employ large numbers of workers who have not completed high school used night school opportunities to recruit prospective workers. Many garment factories, however, did not allow their workers to go to night school, and required them to work overtime. The humiliating experience of one worker, who had to cry, fight, and run away to go to classes, led her becoming a union leader (see chapter 7). On the other hand, some electronics companies set up student lines which were not expected to do overtime work. Most electronics companies also provided some kind of dinner for students before they went to school while garment companies usually did not provide anything for

students. Students who worked at garment companies usually had to buy their own dinner. If a worker was sponsored by her company, she had to stay at the same company until she graduated. If she quit, she was automatically dismissed from school.

About 35% of my respondents said that they started to work in order to go to school. Many did not want to have to rely on their parents to go to high school. Tuition for high school was too expensive for many poor families to afford. When they had to make choices about who to send to school, sons were favored over daughters, so for many young women, the factories in Masan represented their only chance to attend high school.

Some of the more ambitious workers pursued college education, because they expected to be able to get better jobs with a college degree. Educational attainment is a more important factor than skill level in determining the salary range, and the difference between the salaries of college graduates and high school graduates is much greater than that between high school graduates and junior high school graduates. Even with a college diploma, however, women encounter problems because of Korean social structure. By the time women finish their college education through part time study, they are too old to be hired for the jobs that are open to women.

The following case illustrates this problem:

Hyun-hee worked at a factory and attended a junior college at night for two years. She planned to quit working at the factory and find an office job when she graduated. When I knew her, she had already graduated, but she was still working in the factory because she found that, at 24, she was too old to be hired for an office job. Companies in the Zone are reluctant to hire female college graduates, because they can fill office jobs with high school graduates for less money. They also expect women to marry in their mid twenties so they do not hire women in this age group. Thus Hyun-hee was forced to remain in the factory even after she got her diploma. Not only did her education fail to lead to a better job but her education also worked as a barrier against her advancement. I learned that she later quit her job at the factory, but I do not know what happened to her after that.

Besides the small number of workers who went to Junior colleges at night, there were also workers who tried to achieve a college education by taking a correspondence course. This course requires six years to complete a four year college program. Most of the women who started the course became disillusioned when they realized that the diploma would not help them much, and they dropped out.

The different recruitment policies of electronics and garment factories led to status differences between workers in the two types of factories. These statuses also reflected different family backgrounds. While all workers in Masan were from poor families, some were much poorer than others. Some families could afford to send their daughters to high school, whereas others could not even afford to send them to junior high school. There were even a few who because of poverty had forced their daughters to work as maids when they should have been attending primary school.

Worker's family background affects them in many aspects of their lives, and shapes their relationship with each other as well as their strategies to escape from poverty and exploitation.

D. Characteristics of The Work Force

1. Geographical origins

Masan Free Export Zone absorbed female workers mostly from Masan City and the nearby areas in the Kyongsangnam Province. Most of these workers would have had to go either to Seoul or to Pusan for jobs if they had not obtained jobs in the Zone. According to Table 4-5, more than 70% to the respondents of my questionnaire were from Kyongsangnam Province. The next largest group of workers (9%) came from nearby areas of Chollanam Province. Cholla Province is largely rural and unindustrialized, but most Cholla people prefer to go to Seoul to find jobs despite its geographical proximity to Masan.

Table 4-5 <u>Workers by Province</u>		
Province	Number	Percentage (%)
Kyongsangnam	478	70
Kyongsangbuk	44	7
Chollanam	62	9
Chollabuk	18	3
Chungchong	23	3
Kyonggi	2	0
Kangwon	13	2
Cheju	5	1
Seoul	4	1
Pusan	14	2
No response	12	2
Total	675	100

The regional rivalry between Kyongsang Province and Cholla Province was very acute.¹ The Cholla Province accent is very distinctive, and effectively distinguishes Cholla Province people from Kyongsang Province people. Cholla Province people feel that the government has discriminated against them in favor of Kyongsang Province people for hundreds of years. The hostility between these two provinces has grown worse since 1960 because all three presidents have come from Kyongsang Province and they have favored development in their own province. Industrial developments during their presidencies as well as the infrastructure built to support these developments were heavily concentrated in Kyongsang Province.

In 1987 women workers often made comments like "one cannot trust Cholla people," or "Cholla people are disloyal and they always cheat you." Even the matron of the workers' dormitory mentioned that she did not trust women from Cholla Province. The matron told me that she felt she should not be prejudiced against people from Cholla Province and she tried not to show any prejudice, however, as an individual, she still felt she could not trust them. Because of this prejudice, workers from Cholla province felt unwelcome. One worker told me:

I don't know how to prove myself as an honest and trustworthy person to these Kyongsang Province people. They already have this set idea about us and they won't change their attitude no matter what we do. It's not fair. How can I like them when they treat me like this?

A worker from Kyongsang Province told me:

You really cannot trust these Cholla people. I had a very close girl friend who came from Cholla Province. We met at the factory and became room mates. After we lived together for almost two years, she suddenly disappeared. She stole my clothes and my savings passbook; that was all my savings from working in the Zone. After that incident, I told people not to trust anyone from Cholla Province.

These comments reveal the prevalent hostility between people from the two provinces. If the person who stole from her room mate was from Kyongsang Province, it would have been regarded as a personal problem, however, because the person was from Cholla Province, the problem became a regional problem.

2. Decision to work and employment route

Because factory work is a low status job, women who decide to find work in MAFEZ are ones who have few other employment opportunities. Many of these women seek jobs because their families are unable to perform the support functions, that more affluent families provide. These functions include providing secondary education, support during adolescence, and assembling a dowry. Not only are many families unable to fulfill these functions, but a significant number required the income from these young women for various purposes.

234 women (35%) responded that they started to work because a job in the Zone would provide an opportunity to go to high school. Most of these workers would have started to

work at age 15 and 16 (see Table 4-7). Young women who graduated from junior high school and could not afford to go on to high school must have thought that jobs in the Zone were very attractive. They could earn their own living and continue to go to school without burdening their families with tuition costs.

Table 4-6 Reasons for Starting Work

Reason	Number of Workers	%
Main support	9	1
Partial support	81	12
Sibling's education	24	4
Dowry savings	73	11
To go to high school	234	35
To be independent	169	25
For experience	77	11
Other reason	4	1
No response	4	1
Total	675	100%

90 women (13%) responded that they started to work in order to provide full or partial support for their families. Another 24 (4%) responded that they went to work to help pay for their sibling's education costs. Women were quite willing to sacrifice themselves to help their brothers continue their education. Education and employment prospects for males are seen by member of both sexes as more important than education and employment for females. Woman often said, "if my brother does not go to college, he won't get a good job."

Although providing daughters with a dowry is expected of Korean families, 73 women (11%) responded that raising

money for their dowry was their reason for starting to work. After they were actually working, however, many women reported that this was how they used most of their income (see Ch.5). Women who answered that they started to work to be independent, 169 (25%) or for experience, 77 (11%) may also be concealing the inability of their families to continue providing basic support.

There were two peak ages at which women found their first employment, right after junior high school (15 and 16) and right after high school (18 and 19). 284 women (42%) took their first job at ages 15 or 16, and 234 women (35%) took their first job at ages 18 or 19. Outside of the these peaks there were many fewer women seeking for first jobs.

Table 4-7 Age at First Employment

Age	Number of Workers
12	2
13	5
14	44
15	180
16	104
17	59
18	125
19	109
20	30
21	9
22	2
23	2
No Response	4
Total	675

Because jobs in electronics factories are more prestigious, better paying, and have better working conditions than garment factories, a significant number of

workers change industries when they meet the age and education requirements of electronics factories.

Table 4-8
Comparison of the First and the Current Job Categories

First Job (no.)	Workers (no.)	Current Job	Workers
Electronics	372	Electronics	516
Garment	181	Garment	119
Others	66	Others	40
No response	56	No response	0
Total	675	Total	675

As the table indicates, a much larger proportion of my sample was currently working in electronics factories than had obtained their first job in one (516 versus 372). Most of this increase was due to workers moving from garment factories to electronics factories. 70 women in my sample reported that they had made this move, whereas only nine women who began working electronics factories changed their industry. Many more women in garment factories expressed a wish to change their jobs, but either because of their education or their age, they could not move. There were a few skilled workers in garment factories who were able to earn more in their current jobs than they would have received in an electronics factory, but they were exceptional. About half of the respondents had not changed their jobs at all but more than 40% had changed at least once. Of those who changed jobs, more than half said that it was because of working conditions (e.g. ill treatment,

strenuous work, poor conditions). Only 10% said that they changed jobs because of low wage. For the women workers, where they worked and how they were treated were often more important than how much they earned.

Table 4-9 Source of Jobs

Source	Number of Workers
Connections	394
Bulletin Board	193
Newspaper	21
Government Placement	3
Training School	6
Other	54
No Response	4
Total	675

Right outside of the Zone, there was a big bulletin board where factories advertised jobs. These advertisements usually mentioned the age limit, educational requirements, and requested that workers submit photographs and a resume. I never saw any job description which mentioned wages. Every day women workers flocked around to see whether there were any better job prospects. Even though factories advertised their jobs on the bulletin board, in newspapers, and at government placement offices, they relied mostly on individual connections for recruiting workers. More than half of the respondents answered that they obtained their jobs through connections (see Table 4-9). Garment factories recruited more than 80% of their workers through connections while electronics factories recruited about 60% of their workers through connections. Some garment factories offered

monetary incentives to workers who brought their friends to work. Those who recommended new workers were held responsible for the behavior of the new workers.

E. Working Conditions

1. Working environment/working hours

Women workers often complained about their factories. Complaints were usually about their working environments, working conditions, and working hours. The complaints of garment workers were different from those of electronics workers.

In garment factories, workers were affected by dust and by fumes from glue. Breathing dust caused many workers to suffer from bronchitis and bronchial pneumonia. Operating a sewing machine for eight to twelve hours a day also caused swollen legs and feet. Almost everyone had constipation. One worker at a shoe factory told me about how she coped with the fumes from the glue:

When I first started to work at the shoe factory, I could not breathe. The ventilation system was really bad. Other workers told me that it would take a month or so to get used to the fumes. Then, I started to get headaches and had to take aspirin. Now I take aspirin almost every day. I know it is bad, but until I get out of this miserable work, this is the only way I can cope with my headache.

Workers in garment factories also often had to work overnight. One worker recalled:

We had to work overnight at least three times a month. We worked until 4 o'clock in the morning, went home, and had to come back to work by 8:30 the next morning.

There was no way that we could have enough sleep. When the shipping date was near, management set quotas for everyone and permitted anyone who finished her quota to go home. No one talked during the overnight work since everyone wanted to finish as fast as possible to go home. The productivity became higher whenever there was an announcement of overnight work. It was ironic that management could achieve high productivity only when there was overnight work.

At first, management at her factory required overnight work only on Saturdays, claiming that they were worried about workers' health. But, later, they started to order overnight work on other days.

Because of the frequent overnight and long overtime work, there was always tension among women workers and between workers and management in the garment factories. The tensions sometimes led to arguments and even caused physical fights. One worker told me about an incident at her shoe factory.

During the summer time, we had to work overnight twice a week. Everyone was very tired and tense from not having enough sleep. The factory did not operate fans, so everyone was sweating like pigs. People often used abusive language to each other in the factory where I worked. One Sunday morning at four A.M., a woman threw a pair of scissors because she was angry that the manager would not send workers home even after the work was finished. A friend of mine was hit by the scissors and had to go to the emergency room at the hospital. She needed to get six stitches in her arm. Workers in shoe factories are short tempered. I don't know whether it is because they are uneducated. My friend could not get mad at the woman who threw the scissors, only mad at her fate to work in that kind of environment.

Workers in electronics factories were better off than workers in garment factories. Electronics factory workers

rarely had to work overnight, but they also had long overtime hours. Some factories had a very distinctive pattern of overtime work. Workers in one electronics factory told me that they had to work four to six hours of overtime throughout the summer because the company had to produce goods for Christmas orders in the U.S. They only worked overtime during the summer. Those three months were the period when these workers could make money. Even though they complained that they did not have any time for themselves, the complaints were half hearted.

The electronics factory where I worked was one of the biggest companies in the Zone employing about 2,500 workers. It was a subsidiary of a famous Japanese multinational corporation, and produced tape recorders, telephones, and black and white televisions. The company occupied one five story building and parts of the two other buildings in different parts of the Zone. On the fourth floor where I worked, there were approximately 250 workers in two different sections. One was the preparation section where I was and the other was the section where workers assembled parts along a conveyor belt. In each section, there was one manager, one under-manager, and three line leaders, all of whom were men. Both the manager and the under-manager had women workers assigned to them as secretarial helpers. All three line leaders had line helpers to assist them. Both secretarial helpers and line helpers were selected from

production workers, and everyone wished to become one of them. These helpers were regarded as office workers and production workers were envious of them even though they were not paid more.

It was understood that the management had to give religious workers Sunday off to go to church. During the three-week period when we had to work overtime everyday including Sundays, the line leader pressured workers not to go to church on Sunday. There were 4 Protestants and 3 Catholics in our line. Those seven workers insisted that they had to go to church. The three workers who were Catholic gave in and came to work but got permission to attend Mass. The four Protestant workers said that they were committed to church activities for a whole day, and insisted that they could not come to work on Sundays. Our line leader begged them to come to work since our line had too many workers absent from Sunday work. On one occasion he even said that he would go to church with them if they came to work on that Sunday. They did not come to work and the undermanager was quite mad at them. He called them aside and reprimanded them, saying "are you going to be a reverend? Why are you so stubborn?" The workers ignored him and finally he had to give up on the issue.

When I was absent from work for one day, the undermanager's helper summoned and scolded me, saying that as a new worker, I should not be absent. "If you are absent,

your line leader gets a demerit and it will hurt his chances for promotion." Workers were manipulated into identifying with their supervisors, and ignoring their own rights. The line leader told us to come to work even if we were really sick: "Unless you are hospitalized, come to work and then get permission to go home early."

Although assembly work in my line did not seem too difficult at first, after a whole day of work, I could not move my shoulders without pain. I did not need any training because the work did not require any skill, only good eye-sight. Most electronics workers complained about their eyesight and many had to wear glasses. When I was loaned to the other line, I had a hard time attaching tiny nails to the circuit board even with glasses. After one day's work, my eyes hurt so much that I had to ask the line leader to send me back to my regular place. Many workers, however, expected their eyesight to recover when they left factory work. They also thought their job was better than working in the soldering section.

Workers in the soldering section were paid a special allowance of 5,000 won a month. They often had accidents while they worked. The skin of their fingers turned black and some workers got lead poisoning. Management rotated workers in order to lessen the chances of poisoning. Even if workers were rotated, this did not ensure that they were protected against poisoning. Lead poisoning caused

permanent damage that was not always apparent right away. One worker told me about a co-worker who was unable to bear children after working in the soldering section for five years. She found out about the poisoning only after she got married and went to see a doctor to inquire about her infertility.

Workers in both electronics and garment factories believed that whatever kind of illness they had, it would go away as soon as they left factory work. They were shocked by some of the horrible stories about other workers, but thought that it would not happen to them. Even many women with work-related illnesses did not regard them as a serious problem because they did not expect to work for a long time. Furthermore, the fact that their working conditions were better than those in many factories outside the Zone made them feel they were not so badly off.

2. Wages

In 1987, the starting daily wage for most electronics workers was 3,400 won for junior high school graduates, and 3,700 won for high school graduates. The annual wage increases were so meager that the difference between a beginning worker and a worker who had worked for five years was only about 10,000 won a month. Older workers in electronics factories did not make much more than younger ones who just started to work.

The starting daily wage in garment factories was less

than in electronics factories. If a woman started as a helper without any sewing skill, she was paid between 2,800 and 3,000 won a day in 1987. Even though garment workers started at a lower wage, they could make more if they became skilled sewing machine operators. In some factories, A-level workers earned more than 5,000 won a day in the same year.

Women apprentices at garment factories try to learn sewing machine skills quickly and move to another factory. If a worker stays on in the same factory, it takes her about two years before management acknowledge her as a skilled worker. However, if a worker changes to another factory, and lies about her experience she can get a higher rate of pay. A worker with six-months experience usually claims that she has two years of experience when she applies for a job. Management knows about this padding of workers' experiences, but they cannot control it since it is so common. Most factories give a sewing test to all the women they hire.

The minimum cost of living for a single woman set by the Federation of Korean Trade Unions was higher than the wages women workers actually earned. In 1985, when most women workers made less than 150,000 won a month, FKTU published a figure of 177,306 won as the monthly minimum cost of living for a single woman (Korean Association for Women Workers 1987:20). In early 1987 JOC Masan chapter

carried out its own survey of the minimum cost of living for a single woman. They came up with a figure of approximately 185,000 won a month which was about 20 per cent more than most workers in the Zone made.

Most women workers told me that they would be happy if they made around 200,000 - 250,000 won a month including overtime work. This was not a huge increase over what they were getting, and in fact, it was about what they got with the increases following the July-August labor uprising. In 1989 most electronics workers made 7,000 won a day which was twice the wages of 1987. With allowances, workers could now make close to 250,000 won a month.

F. Labor Control

1. Hierarchical management system

Women workers in the Zone were supervised by male line-leaders or male supervisors in most companies. These male supervisors usually had a similar level of educational attainment as the most electronics workers, but male supervisors went through a different promotional path than female workers. They were given chances to take examinations to be promoted to managerial positions while female workers were not expected to advance themselves. Furthermore, male workers received much higher wages than female workers. It was rumored that these male supervisors were actually making more money than managerial personnel

since managers were not paid extra for overtime work.

Managers and male supervisors invariably called women workers by their first names, indicating a lack of respect. They referred their section or line workers as "my children" (uri jip ae dul) implying that the workers were immature girls. Workers are spoken of as "Kongsun-i," a derogatory term. They bitterly complained that the office workers were never called by their first name, but by "Miss such and such." The fact that the "first name calling" came up as one of the most mentioned complaints by workers during the wage increase struggle in July-August, 1987 indicated how these young women workers felt about how factory workers were regarded.

While I was working, I heard many complaints about the overtime policy. Management always announced whether or not there would be overtime work in the afternoon around 3 o'clock. Management controlled women's lives almost entirely in this way. Women workers could not plan their lives outside the factory until they learned what management wanted.

In 1973 companies in the Zone adopted the "Factory Saemaul Movement" modeled on the "Saemaul Movement" in rural areas. The "Factory Saemaul Movement" was "an ideological indoctrination campaign through which the state authorities instilled industrial workers and union leaders with the work ethic and the virtue of submission to managerial

authorities" (Choi, 1983:497). This movement aimed at augmenting worker productivity, promoting harmony and peace on the shop floor, and integrating workers into the enterprise structure.

At the factory where I worked, the "Factory Saemaul Movement" forced workers to contribute free labor to the company. Even though work started at 8 o'clock in the morning, we were required to be there at least 15 minutes early in order to get ready for work. Sometimes, when the manager or supervisor wanted to give a talk, we had to come even earlier.² In the evening we cleaned up our work space only after the bell rang. Cleaning up did not count as part of working hours, rather it was time given to the factory by workers. Newly appointed line assistants were also required to put in two hours of overtime every day for six months before they were paid their position allowance of 10,000 won a month.

As mentioned above, most factories relied heavily on personal connections in recruiting new workers. Management gave monetary incentives to those who brought in new workers, but it also relied on them to control those whom they recruited. If a new worker did not follow factory rules, the supervisor summoned the worker who had recruited her and asked her to solve the problem. This strategy usually worked because the new worker felt a moral obligation toward the woman who had recruited her. One

worker told me:

When the company I worked for went bankrupt, I had to move to another factory. I asked a friend who was a line leader at another garment factory for a job. She had tried to recruit me several times before. When I asked this time, however, she told me that they did not need any more workers. She said that if I promised to help her out, meaning I would work overtime and Sunday without complaining, she would recommend me. I had to promise to do this since I needed a job badly at that time.

One woman even lost her job because a worker she had recommended was involved in a strike. Management acquired one more way of controlling workers by relying on connections for recruiting new workers.

2. Competition among workers and between lines

Until about 1980, management in Japanese owned companies in MAFEZ utilized a labor control strategy which coerced workers into loyalty to the company. This strategy was backed by threats of lay-offs. Management administered a demerit system, according to which a worker would be laid-off if she reached a certain point on the demerit scale. The criteria for measurement in the demerit system were "sincerity, cooperation with the company, efficiency, attendance, and loyalty to the company." (The Committee for Justice and Peace of South Korea 1976:60). This led workers to compete against each other.

In 1987 managements of some electronics and garment companies were using a different system of bonuses and extra monetary incentives to drive workers into competing against

each other and with other lines. A worker in an electronics factory told me that there was a scale of bonuses paid by her factory (A to E). She complained that there was no way workers could know what category of bonus they would receive until they actually saw their paycheck. "You never know why you got a B level instead of an A level bonus." A worker had to work harder and harder without knowing how she stood in relation to the quota. Many electronics factories where management employed this kind of the bonus system had to face workers' outrage during the uprising in 1987. Workers demanded the abolition of this bonus system and its replacement with uniform bonuses.

In the electronics factory where I worked, there was a system of monetary incentives for lines. Instead of paying a different scale of bonuses, management announced a system of prizes. There were three different prizes: the first was an achievement scale; the second was for making the fewest defects; the third was for attendance. The achievement system forced workers to work as fast as possible in order to achieve the highest production. The defects system forced workers to be careful and control the quality of the products. The attendance system made workers identify with their line. If a worker was absent, she was condemned by her co-workers. Having workers check on other workers was a very efficient form of labor control. Management did not need to get involved in checking on

workers. The lines that won the prize each month either went out for a group dinner or divided the prize money among line members.

The bonus and monetary incentive systems in garment factories worked differently from the ones in electronics factories. Rather than setting up a different bonus scale, garment factories gave an individual bonus to workers who worked fast and hard. Usually either the line leader or the supervisor decided who should receive the bonus. Management gave these individual bonuses to workers in secret and told workers not to mention them to the others. This system set up competition among workers since they did not know what the quota was for receiving the bonus. Workers only knew that they had to work as hard as or harder than the previous month in order to receive the bonus. Workers complained to me that the system was not entirely fair since the line leader or the supervisor might favor some workers over others when making recommendations for the bonus. Workers had to produce as much as possible and they had to be submissive to the line leader and the supervisor.

Some garment factories also had a prize system for perfect attendance for lines. One worker told me that she had to sacrifice her night school trip because of the prize.

My second year school trip was set for October 1 to 3. Since the first and the third of October were holidays, I thought that I could easily get a day off. But, management decided to pay us to come to work for those two days instead. I wanted to go in spite of my manager's orders, but my line leader told me that we

could not win the prize if I was absent. Management would give the winning line 30,000 won and all the line workers would go out for dinner. The line leader told me that I should pay 30,000 won if I decided to go on the trip. I finally decided that it was cheaper to give up the 20,000 won I had paid for the trip than to pay 30,000 won, but I was really angry at the system.

In one shoe factory, everyone in a line received 2,000 won each time the line achieved the full quota; if a line achieved 90% of the quota, they received 1,000 won. A line leader in the factory told me that the full quota was too high for any line to achieve: "In order to achieve 100%, workers had to sit still in front of sewing machines and concentrate. They could not move at all." According to her, this system did not work very well until management changed its tactics. Then the line leader received 100,000 won if her line achieved the full quota at least three times a month. Every line leader had a personal incentive to drive workers as fast as possible. Line leaders also indoctrinated workers about the bonus system ("You could earn much more money if you worked hard enough.") so that every worker came to work hoping to achieve the full quota.

3. Out zone processing

The term "out zone processing" applies to processing which takes place outside the designated area, MAFEZ. There are three main reasons for relying on out zone processing. First, it is cheaper to process some parts outside the zone. Second, if factory capacity of a certain company is inadequate to meet an order. Third, if an order requires

more than the current labor force it is easier for a company to hire short term workers outside the zone. There is a large amount of out zone processing going on in the Masan area.

The out zone processing was allowed as soon as MAFEZ started to operate. The conditions imposed on out zone processing were: parts processed outside the zone could not be finished goods; the percentage of the out zone processing could not exceed 60% of the whole product. The MAFEZ administrative office pointed to the limited capacity of the Zone as the reason why they let companies rely on out zone processing: "without out zone processing, MAFEZ could not have handled the sharp increase in export volume" (MAFEZ 1987 15 year MAFEZ History). One electronics company in the zone relied on 20 different subcontracting firms outside the Zone in order to meet their annual export volume of over US \$100,000,000.

Table 4-10 Employment of the Out Zone Processing Firms

	Out Zone Firms	Out Zone Employees	MAFEZ Employees
1976	94	4,518	29,953
1980	108	4,620	28,532
1983	207	7,782	30,989
1984	252	8,521	33,858
1985	193	7,509	28,983

Source: MAFEZ Admin. Office 1987 MAFEZ 15-year History

The number of employees of the out zone processing subcontracting firms has increased even more rapidly than

the number of employees in the Zone. In 1985 the number of out zone processing employees was more than seven thousand (see Table 4-10). Furthermore, the number of employees in the out zone processing firms represented almost 20% of the total manufacturing employees in Masan City.

The sharp increase of the number of the firms conducting the out zone processing was encouraged by both the government and the companies in the Zone. The government encouraged the out zone processing firms to use local products for their parts. These firms also absorbed a large number of workers in the Masan area. Companies in the Zone welcomed the opportunity to reduce production costs through out zone processing.

Although not actually located in the Zone, these subcontracting firms are very much a part of the manufacturing process of the Zone. Since the production volume of the Zone is totally dependent on world market demand, subcontracting firms serve as a buffer. The booms and busts of the business cycles are primarily absorbed by these subcontracting firms who can dismiss workers without any reservation. Workers in these factories also serve as a "reserve labor pool" for the big companies. The subcontracting companies employ mostly married women who, because of their age, cannot get jobs from the companies in the Zone. Subcontracting firms are run with little investment, and less concern for the workers. Owners simply

rent a space, and try to produce as much as possible as cheaply as possible.

Recently, the out zone processing firms started to spread out of Masan City because of high rent in the city. They also found cheaper labor in farm areas. Table 4-11, shows the spread to farm areas.

Table 4-11
Regional Distribution of Out Zone Processing Firms

	Masan City		Other Cities		Farm Area		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1983	73	35.3	110	53.1	24	11.6	207
1984	88	34.9	133	52.8	31	12.3	252
1985	74	38.3	83	43.0	36	18.7	193

Source: MAFEZ Admin. Office 1987 MAFEZ 15 Year History

The quality of goods produced in these factories is very uneven. Many workers in MAFEZ complained about rejects made by subcontracting factories.

I could not understand why the company sent those parts to subcontracting factories. Sometimes, over 10% of products made from outside are rejects, but, supervisors just order us to fix them. However, I learned that the company makes more money if it sends out to subcontracting factories even with 10% rejects.

One supervisor said that the company saves 30% of its overhead this way because they do not have to pay bonuses, allowances, medical insurance, etc. Big companies cut expenses by giving orders to subcontracting factories, and owners of those subcontracting firms make money squeezing wage differences from their workers. Thus, the workers in Masan say, "men's wages do not go up because of women

workers, and single women's wages do not go up because of married women's willingness to work at low wages."³

G. Welfare Facilities

1) Dormitory: The first MAFEZ dormitory buildings (initially only two buildings) were built by the government in 1973, and accommodated 600 workers. The dormitory was administered by a steering committee selected by companies operating in the Zone. In 1974 due to the oil crisis, the steering committee was dissolved and the dormitory was closed. In 1977 the dormitory was reopened and a new steering committee was organized from the 34 companies, employing more than 200 workers. 850 workers were accommodated in the reopened dormitory .

In 1987 the dormitory consisted of 4 residential buildings with a total of 336 rooms (buildings were added in 1981 and 1982). There was an additional building with a kitchen, dining room, and a public bath. 2,050 workers from 31 companies were accommodated the dormitory. Six women had to share each room which was just large enough for them to roll out their bedding at night. The monthly fee for the dormitory was 30,000 won per person. The workers paid half of the amount and the companies they worked for paid the other half.

The dormitory was supervised by a matron who had been there since 1973. Under the matron, there was one

supervisor who looked after each building. Every room had a representative and each floor had a representative also. The floor representative was responsible for taking attendance every night at 10 o'clock. Women had to be in their room by ten o'clock unless they were high school or college students, or working for a night shift. In 1987, 14 workers were attending college and 264 workers were going to high school. The matron tried to enforce strict rules for the young women workers, so that their parents could send their young daughters to the Zone without worrying about their behavior, such as dating. If a woman missed attendance call three times, she was reprimanded by the matron, and had to clean the bathrooms for a month. If a woman stayed out without getting prior permission more than three times, she was asked to leave the dormitory. Even these strict rules, however, did not prevent some workers from getting into trouble (i.e. there were even isolated cases of a young woman getting pregnant).

Workers had to wait for a long time, sometimes more than six months, in order to get into the dormitory. The main reason why workers wanted to get into the dormitory was because the fee was cheap. It only cost workers 15,000 won a month for room and board at the dormitory. The factories which employed the women also had to contribute 15,000 won per workers, so only workers from the larger factories were eligible to live there. Room and board, and transportation

for women living outside the dormitory cost at least twice as much as the living in the dormitory.

Another reason why women wanted to stay in the dormitory was that their reputations were protected. They could tell prospective husbands and in-laws that they had lived in the dormitory. The matron told me that she frequently vouched for the good behavior of dormitory residents to their future husbands and in-laws.

Despite the low cost of dormitory and the importance of their reputation, many women moved out the dormitory after a while. They complained about not having enough freedom and about not getting along with their roommates. An electronics worker complained:

We do not choose our own roommates, so we do not always get perfect roommates. It is not easy to have six women sharing a room and we cannot ask for a transfer even if we do not get along with some of them. Some women play their radios loudly when others would rather have a quiet evening to read. When I live with my own friends, I can ask them not to bother me, but here in the dormitory I cannot do that and I just have to bear it until I get out of here.

The complaints were not only about roommates. A lot of women were not satisfied with the meals provided by the dormitory. They said, "Meals we get here are worse than the lunch at the factory," or "I do not understand why they cannot come up with better menus." Furthermore, the meal schedule was so rigid that workers frequently missed meals and had to buy their own dinner outside.

Dormitory buildings were equipped with boiler systems

and hot water was supposed to be available all the time, but workers frequently found that their rooms were cold in winter and they did not have enough hot water in the morning unless they were among the first to get up. Workers had to choose between having a little extra sleep and having hot water for washing.

2) Welfare Hall: In 1983 a "Welfare Hall" was built inside the Zone, by the government in order to provide recreational facilities for workers. Classes such as calligraphy, Japanese, English, flower design etc. were offered in the Welfare Hall at night, but only a small number of workers attended them. Workers often had to work overtime so they could not attend classes regularly.

3) Health Clinic: Workers said that the health clinic in the Zone was very inadequate. The clinic did not have either the personnel nor the facilities to accommodate any kind of industrial accident. They usually just gave out some pills to workers who came to complain about headaches or stomach aches and let them lie down for a while. Workers knew that they could not get much help from the clinic, but they did not have time nor money to visit outside doctors when they got sick.

4) Medical Insurance: Since 1977, the government has required companies in the Zone to provide the medical insurance for their workers. Workers had 1,500 won deducted from their pay every month. Most workers could not use the

benefits from the insurance. It was almost impossible to get permission to see a doctor during working hours and by the time they finished working, most doctors' offices were closed. Unless women were sick enough to be hospitalized, they relied on self diagnosis and bought medicine at a pharmacy.

H. Summary

Multinational companies operating in Masan have created new labor force of young single females. The young women who work in the Zone have few other options available to them (see Salaff 1981; Sheridan and Salaff 1984), therefore, companies are able to hire a work force for extremely low wages. They are able to select characteristics suited for the repetitious and exhausting tasks required for export processing. Youth and inexperience, as well as Korean gender expectations serve to make this labor force easy to control. Management relies on young women's expectations to enforce work discipline and limit organized opposition. In the following chapter I discuss how workers perceive their situation.

Notes

1. The regional rivalry reached the bottom during the "Kwangju massacre" in May 1980. Chun Doo-hwan government sent in the army commandos to suppress an anti-government demonstration in Kwangju. The army commandos killed over 1,000 civilians in suppressing the demonstration. The government reported only about 100 people got killed in this incident, but other sources reported that it was well over 1,000 people. The commandos involved in the massacre were rumored to be from Kyongsang Province. Cholla Province people refer to the massacre as genocide by Kyongsang Province people (Hwang 1985).
2. The factory where I worked was considered better in this regard. In some factories, the scheduled morning meeting required that workers had to come to work at least 30 minutes early.
3. See, Boserup (1970) for documentation of cases in which "women's work" leads to "overcrowding" and how overcrowding contributes to lowering female wages.

CHAPTER V. SOCIAL MOBILITY AND WOMEN WORKERS

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss young women factory workers' perceptions about their lives and their position in society. I examine the way they live, their plans for the future, their dating patterns and marriage plans. In order to understand the possibilities of social mobility for workers in Masan, I also consider the life histories of women who worked in the Zone before they got married, and try to determine what patterns exist among workers in different industries. My information is derived from survey questionnaires and extensive interviews with both current workers in the Zone and married women who worked in the Zone in the 1970s and the early 1980s.

Workers are ambivalent about working in factories. On the one hand, factory work is considered respectable, and the pay is better than most other options available to young women. Women also appreciate the opportunity to be independent from their families and to run their own lives. On the other hand, the work is hard, hours are long, and factory work is a low status job. Workers often complain "people look down on us because we work in factories."

Young women workers are willing to tolerate low wages and poor working conditions because they anticipate spending

only a short time in the factory before they get married and leave the labor force. They expect marriage to improve their status and take it for granted that they will be supported by their husbands. Marriage is the principal strategy used by these young women to improve their lives. This inhibits their involvement in labor unions and other collective strategies to improve their working and living conditions.

Most women do marry and leave the labor force in their mid twenties so management does not have to worry about seniority-related pay increases. The turnover rate also diminishes labor militancy and makes workers more difficult to organize. Thus, multinational corporations benefit from the importance placed on marriage by the already existing patriarchal ideology of Korea.

Few women intend to work after they get married, and even then they prefer to have some other type of work besides factory work. Most women give reasons related to their position in the patriarchal family to explain their not wanting to work after marriage, e.g., "I want to be a good wife and a mother," or "It is not good to work after one is married." Some, however, give reasons directly related to their experience as factory workers, e.g., "I am sick and tired of working in a factory," or "I worked in a factory too long already."

After marriage, however, many women find their

husbands' salaries are inadequate to support their families and they are forced to return to factory work under more arduous conditions. Working class husbands cannot guarantee economic security for their wives and these women become exploited both as workers and as wives. Furthermore, they receive neither the protected status promised to women by patriarchal families¹ nor the freedom promised to women by their participation in the labor market.²

B. Getting Out of Factory Work

1. Young women's perception of their situation

There are other jobs available for young women besides factory work. These include being housemaids, or working in coffee shops, bars, or barbershops, but how one makes money in Korean society is very important, and factory work is considered more respectable than these other jobs. The idea that factory work is better than other work is shared by both women workers and their parents. Factory work is viewed by parents as providing their daughters with some supervision until they get married. These days, factory work is so common for young women, that it is quite acceptable for them to be factory workers (cf. Kung 1983; Sheridan and Salaff 1984).

The respectability of a job is important for young women since it affects their marriage prospects. The only other job which is considered respectable, although it is

lower in status than factory work, is being a housemaid. During the 1950s and the 1960s before many factory jobs became available for young women, jobs as housemaids were the only ones open to young rural women who wanted to keep a respectable reputation. When factory work first became available, being a factory worker was not considered as good as being a housemaid. Housemaid jobs were perceived as protecting young women from outside influence while factory work provided too much freedom. Young women without supervision were seen as susceptible to bad influences and in danger of becoming morally loose. Few women were willing to work for factories since they were worried about their reputation.

People's attitudes toward factory work began to change as it became more common. Mass media played an important role in changing people's perception about factory work by praising women factory workers as "soldiers of industry." Factory work became more attractive than domestic work for young women, because it paid more and it offered them more free time and more control over their lives. A factory worker could do whatever she wanted to after she finished work.

As more young women worked in factories, fewer of them became housemaids, and by the 1970s housemaids were mostly older, married women. In 1987 housemaids in Masan made 5,000 won for an eight-hour work day which was comparable to

a factory wage. Most of these housemaids, however, were married women.

In spite of the possibility of earning more money, young women were not interested in working in coffee shops, bars, or barbershops. An electronics worker said, "If a woman works in restaurants or bars, her chances of getting married to a decent man are almost nil. Even though I earn less working in a factory, I would rather be here than working as a bar hostess." Women working as hostesses in coffee shops or bars are perceived as one step short of being prostitutes. When I asked women workers what they thought of bar hostesses, a typical answer was:

Once women start to work in those places, they will surely become prostitutes. They no longer care about their reputation. Since they get used to earning money easily they will never come back to doing hard work in factories.

Despite this vehement condemnation of women working at restaurants and bars, a few young women left jobs in factories in the Zone to work in restaurants or bars. As the Zone expanded, more and more bars opened and they lured young women who wanted to earn more money in less time. One manager told me that at least one out of every five hostesses had once worked in the Zone. His estimate might have been exaggerated, but it did not seem too outrageous since many hostesses would have had jobs before working in bars. However, very few women workers even considered the option of becoming bar hostesses. The work was seen as too

degrading.

One young woman who was working as a bar hostess said that factory work was too hard for too little money. Hye-sun was only twenty one years old but had been working either at coffee shops or at bars since she was nineteen. She came from a poor and broken family. She never finished primary school education because of family problems. Her father committed suicide when she was seven years old and her mother became an alcoholic. She began working at a textile factory outside the Zone when she was fifteen years old and later went to work in a garment factory inside the Zone. While she worked as a factory worker she met her boyfriend and got pregnant. After she had an abortion, she did not go back to factory work. Her sister said, "She was already ruined and she didn't really care what happened to her after that." She started out as a coffee shop hostess and became a bar hostess. She excused her work by claiming that her bar was different from others:

My job at this bar is clean, I do not have to go out with customers if I do not want to. I do not even have to drink if I don't want to. A lot of bars force hostesses to drink to hike up the bill, but my employer is different.

At the bar, she was making about 400,000 won/month which was a lot more than the 150,000 won/month a factory worker would earn, even with 40 to 50 hours of overtime. She went to work around 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening and came home at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. She said that she did not plan

to get married in the near future and wanted to save enough money to open a small store.

Even though she claimed that she did not want to get married, many bar hostesses hoped to get out of their work and get married. One woman whom I interviewed was working at an electronics factory during the day and at a bar at night. When I asked her why she continued to work at the factory, she said:

I don't have to work at the factory since I earn enough at night. But I would like to go back to my home village and get married when I save enough money for my dowry. If I work only as a hostess, I don't think I will have any chance to marry. Since I still work at the factory, I can tell everyone that I was a factory worker. A man will accept a factory worker as his wife but not a bar hostess.

Factory work was certainly more respectable than working in restaurants, bars, and coffee shops. But it was still considered a low status job. Most women would prefer a job as an office worker even if they would make less money. The status difference between office worker ("Hoesawon") and factory worker ("Kongwon") was great:

I wish I could work as an office worker. If I could bribe someone to get that position, I would. I know I can make more money here working overtime, since office jobs do not have any overtime pay. But money is not everything. I hate the way people call us "Kongsuni," which they never call office workers. Even though factory work is respectable, it is still low status. I try very hard not to look like a factory worker. I try to wear clothes like office workers, but people somehow know that I am a "Kongsuni."

Women workers sometimes said in exasperation, "What do you expect from us? After all, we are only 'Kongsuni,'" using

the derogatory term for themselves. They clearly felt bitter about being factory workers.

Most women workers simply accepted the fact that their supervisors, managers, and almost all of the line leaders were men. Since women did not expect to stay in factory for long and the managerial jobs were strictly for men, they did not even hope for any promotion above the line leader position. Workers complained that female line leaders were more oppressive. They accepted being ordered around by male line leaders or supervisors, but they resented women line leaders or supervisors. It meant that they had to intellectually confront the issue of being treated badly as individuals not because they were women.

There were rumors that a woman who was a manager in one electronics factory had achieved her position through sleeping with her bosses. She had worked for a long time in the same factory before she was promoted. Since it was so rare for a woman to be promoted to a managerial position her advancement drew a lot of speculation.

Workers said, "Everyone in this factory knows how she got promoted. She slept around with her bosses. Everyone hates her here." The accusations that were made against this woman could not have been true. Had she been sexually involved with more than one man, she could have been easily discarded and would not have been promoted. The workers who spread these rumors did not know any names of men with whom

she might have been involved, but could not accept that her promotion could have any other basis.

A woman in a managerial position provoked hostility from women workers. They found factory work tolerable because they shared the misery, and the status as women and as workers. A female manager aroused jealousy because her success threatened workers' self images and also threatened the carefully constructed boundary between male and female in the shop floor.

When I asked young women workers how they felt about being factory workers, they typically answered, "I can't wait to get out of here." Very few said that they were proud of being workers. For most of them, the time spent working in a factory was a period they would rather forget. They did not feel part of a working class, rather they felt they were experiencing individual misfortune or ill fate.

Factory workers were young and relatively naive, so they did not know how to organize to oppose management policies. The low-status of factory work was seen as a temporary condition, so workers did not want to take risks that might jeopardize their future. Instead of thinking of organizing themselves, they would work long overtime hours to raise extra money for their dowries.

Women workers in the Zone were not homogeneous. Garment factories and electronics factories employed women who differed in their family background and educational

background (see chapter 4). There was some antagonism between workers in these two categories. Garment workers felt envy, jealousy, and hostility toward electronics workers, while electronics workers felt superior toward garment workers. Garment workers said, "Electronics workers think they are much better than us," and "Electronics workers look down on us because most of them have high school education and a lot of us have only junior high school or primary school education." Some of them observed "Electronics workers get birthday presents, they get more holidays off, and they get more bonuses than we do," or "They wear better clothes than us and their face look brighter than ours. I don't think that they earn much more than us, but I do envy them." Sometimes garment workers were quite hostile, saying "Electronics workers are no better than us, after all they work in factories too, don't they?" One garment worker said:

I think garment workers are more honest. Electronics workers always seem smiling, but I doubt that they are always that happy. Workers in garment factories curse a lot and sometimes get violent, but isn't it better to show your feelings honestly rather than hide them?

Electronics workers rarely made comments about garment workers, however, they clearly felt superior. They said, "At least we are all high school graduates, garment factories will hire anyone." They observed "Our working conditions are not that bad compared to those of garment factory." Electronics workers usually referred to their

place of employment as their company ("Hoesa") rather than as their factory ("Kongjang"). In Korean, "Hoesa" implies white collar jobs and "Kongjang" implies blue collar jobs. Even though electronics workers were production workers, they identified with white collar workers. They knew that they were better paid than garment workers (at least those garment workers in unskilled jobs). The management in electronics factories encouraged workers to identify with their company. They tried to teach them to be proud to work at their company.

While electronics workers thought of themselves more as company workers, garment workers did not have any such illusions. They knew that they worked in a factory where working conditions were bad, wages were low, and they were badly treated. Since there were no grounds for building pride in their factories, management of garment factories did not worry about how workers felt about their factories.

Although the wages paid to women workers are very low, their earning power gives them a degree of freedom. This freedom can be expressed as individualism and consumerism. Most workers in Masan tried to follow fashion trends. There were always cheap accessories, that workers could buy without difficulty (costs were usually 50 cents to 1 dollar). There was a ribbon fad at the time I was working. Practically everyone bought a ribbon and wore it regardless of how long their hair was. Vendors carried different

colors and styles of bows. The trend started among middle-class college women and passed down to working class women. By the time it reached the workers, the ribbons had become very cheap, so that even they could afford them.

Once they started to work, women became interested in fashion and cosmetics as part of a peer group. Right out of high school, a woman did not wear any make-up. After about a year of working, she started to do her nails. Polishing nails was not an extravagant expense, and workers used pale pinks or transparent colors. Next, she would buy a lipstick. Many workers only used nail polish and lipstick. At about 23 years of age, women started to use liquid make-up and eye shadow. During breaks and at lunch time, they talked about different cosmetic brands and shared them among close friends. The factory where I worked ran a small shop where workers bought cosmetics and other consumer goods on credit. They paid in installments taken from their paycheck.

Peer pressure insures that women conform to the expectation for their age category. When I started to work, I had a hair cut so that I would look younger and I did not wear any make-up. About a week later a worker came over to me and advised me to put on some make-up. "After all," she said "we are not that young, so we need to use some make-up and you may need to have a permanent. Your straight hair is for a 20-year-old, but not for us." She was 25 years old

and thought everyone who was over 23 should have a permanent.

A few workers took up high fashion clothing. Name brand dresses were tremendously expensive, costing more than their monthly wages. Many dress shops gave women workers opportunities to buy on credit. It took them almost a year to pay for some clothes, but the women insisted that they could wear them for much longer than cheap dresses. These attitudes encouraged workers to spend themselves into debt. The consumption patterns of workers were getting closer to those of middle-class women. Workers thought "why shouldn't we be able to afford it?" All mass media, especially television, advertised middle-class life styles. Most television dramas portrayed middle- or upper-middle class families. A lot of workers watched television and fantasized a dream world. Getting married to a white collar man was the only way for them to get out of the miseries. Thus, marriage seemed the ultimate escape for most workers.

2. Marriage as an individual strategy

Dating and marriage were the two most important topics young women workers discussed among themselves. Except for a few who were very shy and private, most workers in the same line knew about other workers' boyfriends. Since co-workers saw each other every day, they often confided in them. Women who were under twenty-two talked mostly about group meetings and dating; women who were twenty-three and

older talked mostly about individual arranged meetings, steady boyfriends, and wedding plans.

More than three quarters of unmarried women who responded to my questionnaire answered that they expected to choose their husband themselves, rather than making a traditional arranged marriage. They considered themselves to be "progressive, new women," who would date men they liked and decide whom they would marry. Nevertheless arranged meetings were still very important for meeting potential partners. Out of 105 married women who answered my questionnaire, 41 had made "arranged marriages" (Chungmae Kyorhon) and 59 had made "love marriages" (Yonae Kyorhon). The rest said that their marriages were combination of arranged and love marriage.

Because arranged meetings were so important, managers were willing to accept them as an excuse for a young woman not coming to work on Sundays. This excuse was sometimes abused by workers who simply wanted to take Sundays off. Supervisors and line leaders, and sometimes young women themselves, also arranged group meetings on Saturday evenings when there was no overtime work. Many women workers met their future husbands at these meetings.³

Most women in the Zone dated men from similar backgrounds to themselves, especially production workers who worked in Changwon. Dating encouraged workers to become more westernized and exposed them to the consumer culture of bars

and night clubs. Couples usually dated on Saturday evenings when there was no overtime work. They might go to a movie theater and then to a cafe for dinner. Many women said that this was the only time they ate expensive food. They might also go for day trips to the countryside on Sundays. In most cases men were responsible for paying all the expenses during these outings, but some women said that they paid half the expenses.

Most workers did not have college education, but dating college students was perceived as prestigious. They felt that they were like college students since they dated students. A number of women workers were involved with college students and they were proud of being chosen by these male students. However, most of these dates did not turn into marriages. Most relationships turned sour after a short while. Workers who had dated college students advised other younger women to be careful of them. They told younger workers, "Wake up and face reality. The guy you are dating now will never marry you. Why can't you see that they are just using you financially, emotionally, and sexually. I know that because I had the same experience." However, the young women rarely took this sort of advice.

A woman whom I met at the factory where I worked confided in me that she had a boyfriend who was a college student. She believed that they would get married soon. She was worried that she did not have any savings for her

dowry since she spent all her wages to help her family. Her mother told her that if she started to save for her dowry she would have enough in two or three years. But the worker was not sure that her boyfriend would wait for that long. She had paid the deposit for the two-rooms where her family lived in Ulsan. She resented the fact that she could not take the deposit for her dowry, but if she did her family would have nowhere to live. She lived with her two younger sisters in Masan and her boyfriend was staying with them while he was looking for his own room. It was clear that she had already slept with him.

Most college students did not earn any money and they did not have anything to spend on dating. Women workers had to pay for most of their dating expenses. In some cases, they even gave pocket money to their boyfriends. Factory women were a lot easier for male students to deal with than women college students who were not easy to date and would not pay for anything. Furthermore, in case of sexual relationships, male students did not feel as responsible toward workers as they were toward women in their own social class.

There were reports in newspapers about how male college students exploited women workers in Masan. One college newspaper in Seoul contained an article about relationships between students of Kyongnam University and women workers in the Zone. Students of Kyongnam University protested against

the article, but they also admitted some students did exploit factory workers. Women in Masan said that male students considered factory workers easy to get, boasting: "We do not have to force them. They are more than willing to sleep with us if we want to."

Most young women did not expect to date college students. Some thought that the relationship would not work out because of their status difference, and there were not many opportunities to meet students. However, workers were sympathetic towards those women who were involved with students, since it was acceptable that a wife had less education than husband.

Women workers frequently discussed the topic of "Dong-go" along with dating and marriage. "Dong-go" (living together) designates a couple living together without having had a wedding ritual or registering their marriage. The wedding ritual is considered more important than the registration of a marriage. Most Korean couples register their marriages after the wedding, or even after they have had their first baby.

Most women did not even consider the possibility of living with a man before they were married. When I asked them about the subject they said "I will never live with my boyfriend before I get married." But most women knew workers who lived with their boyfriends. Women who were younger than 23 years old had very negative attitudes

towards "Dong-go" arrangements, but women older than 23 were more understanding. One 23-year-old woman said:

I used to regard women who were living with a man as immoral, but I have changed my opinion a lot. Right now I cannot get married because I do not have any money for my dowry. A wedding will cost too much money. I would rather save the dowry money and use it for a deposit on a room. Three of my very close girlfriends are living with their boyfriends because they cannot afford to have weddings. "Dong-go" is not a bad idea for those of us who are poor and at the age to get married, because we will marry the person. We are not like young women who get involved without knowing what they are doing.

A married woman who used to work at a shoe factory told me that most of the workers in her line were living with their boyfriends. She knew that many workers lived in "Dong-go" arrangements, but was surprised when she found out exactly how many, by doing a survey for the Catholic church. She said that it was easy to tell who was legally married and who was in "Dong-go" arrangements: "Workers who lived with their boyfriends without getting married rarely talked about their spouses. They just do not act like someone who is married." She claimed that garment factory workers were more likely than electronics factory workers to be in "Dong-go" arrangements because of their financial situation. Most married women said that although it was not a desirable thing to do, they could understand if women of marriageable age lived with their boyfriends because of financial reasons, but they were opposed to younger women becoming involved in those relations.

One woman defined her marriage as "Dong-go" because she had not held a wedding ritual yet. She and her boyfriend were engaged before they started to live together and registered their marriage after three months. Because there had been no ritual, however, she did not think of herself as being properly married. She would only consider herself married after a wedding ceremony. They were unable to have a wedding because her husband's older brother was still unmarried and his family wanted him to be married first. She helped arrange his wedding, and was planning her own wedding when I interviewed her.

Another reason why they started to live together hastily was because of her unexpected pregnancy. She explained why they decided to live together:

I got pregnant while we were dating. I was a virgin and it was the first time we had sexual intercourse. I did not know what to do. In our company, management allowed some women who got pregnant ("into trouble") time off so they could have an abortion. Women who were considered trouble makers were forced to resign. They gave me time off, but we decided to keep the baby so I quit the job.

Young women were naive about their sexuality and many believed that they would not get pregnant the first time they had sexual intercourse. I heard stories about women workers who became pregnant but did not realize it until the fourth or fifth month, and had to have late abortions. An early abortion cost from 20,000 to 30,000 won in 1987, and late abortions cost more. No statistics were available

about workers' pregnancy or abortions in MAFEZ.

Once a year a "Sex Education" class was offered in the factory where I worked. A woman from YWCA came and lectured on sex and pregnancy. The main theme of her talk was "Do not trust men, and do not sleep with them no matter what they tell you." She did not mention birth control or contraception methods. She did not consider the possibility that women workers would be sexually active and preached that they should wait until they were married to have sexual experiences. Another sex education program was offered at the Catholic Women's Center. But the program also stressed that women should abstain from sex until after marriage.

Women workers who became pregnant felt guilt and shame. I only heard about one place that did something to help these women: There a woman doctor performed abortions at low cost. Although some unmarried women were sexually active, they were very confused about their sexuality. They were caught in between traditional Confucian values for young women and the pressures of urban life.

Family is the main focus of young women's lives, and they are especially interested in investing in their marriage and in the family in which they expect to spend most of their lives. Many women said that saving for their dowry was the main reason they worked. Despite the low wages paid to women, practically every worker saves some money every month. They skip breakfast or dinner and rely

only on the lunch provided by the company. By cutting back on necessities, factory workers are able to save money for their dowry.⁴

The importance these workers attribute to the dowry reflects the high expectations which Korean women have for marriage, and their commitment to patriarchy. They are trying to improve their future status by saving money for a dowry which will enable them to marry a man from a better class background. The Korean dowry system has become much more elaborate in recent years with the increased participation of women in the labor force (Kendall 1985). But as Laurel Kendall points out, young women can rarely save the whole amount required for their wedding. In 1987, workers told me "even a beggar's wedding costs three million won," which shocked me (that was about \$3,700). The amount spent on a wedding depends on the financial situation of the bride's family. Married women whom I interviewed, had spent from 500,000 won to 5 million won (\$650 - \$6,250).

Most women⁵ considered the man's character to be the most important factor in selecting a husband, while only a few responded that they would consider the man's wealth first. A few gave education as the most important factor. Women in all types of factories were broadly similar in their expectations about marriage. Most expected to choose a husband based on his character, to make a "love marriage," and to get married at age twenty-six. Because these women

planned to get married at a certain age, management did not have to worry about seniority-related pay increases. The turnover rate also diminished labor militancy and made workers more difficult to organize. Thus, multinational corporations gained advantages from the already existing patriarchal ideology of Korea.

While both electronics workers and garment workers reported saving for dowry expenses as their first priority, there were distinctions between the two categories. Electronics workers listed using their income for their own living expenses as their second choice. But garment workers listed supporting their families as their second choice, suggesting that their families had greater financial need. The difference that existed between unmarried electronics workers and garment workers became wider after they got married.

C. Negotiated Identities: Married Women Workers

This section examines how women workers use available options in their struggle for a stronger position within society. Capitalism and patriarchy each confront women with a different set of choices and barriers as they negotiate their identities in the family as well as in the work place. The system of relationships established by industrial capitalism undermines aspects of the pre-existing system of gender relations based on Confucian values, but it also

introduces new forms of economic exploitation. The nature and limitations of women's choices will be explored in this section.

1. Leaving the labor force

Women workers leave their jobs upon marriage expecting that they will never return to factory work. Contrary to their expectations, however, only a few married women are able to be housewives and stay at home.⁶ The poverty of women's labor market options makes "the exchange of domestic work for financial support" something that is highly valued (Ferree 1985). They are willing to trade-off being a good wife and mother for economic support. Thus capitalism reinforces patriarchal family forms.

Most married women left the job market when they got married and nearly all unmarried women planned to leave their job upon marriage.⁷ Unmarried women typically said that they would leave their job to be "a good wife and a good mother." They perceived marriage and work to be incompatible; if a woman wanted to be a good mother and a good wife she could not work. They expected to be supported by their husbands upon marriage and were willing to be subordinate to them.

Of the women whom I interviewed, most of those who were staying at home were either recently married or caring for very young children. Most planned to return to work after their children reached school age. One 25-year-old former

garment worker told me that she was planning to stay home even after her children grew up. She had been married for a year and half, and had a baby daughter. She was grateful to her husband for understanding her family's financial situation and not asking for any dowry when they got married. She explained why she did not plan to return to work:

I worked in the same garment factory for seven and half years before I got married. I do not even want to look at another sewing machine. My husband earns 400,000 won a month as an engineer. That is not a lot but we can live on it. My husband bought the apartment where we live and we have mortgage payments of 70,000 won a month. I do not have big ambitions. I just want to stay home to take care of my daughter and my husband. I worked for a long time. My husband wants me to stay home too, so why should I go back to the miserable sewing machine factory job?

Most women said that their husbands did not want them to work. Many said that any husband who wanted his wife to work was not really a man. Whether they had to go back to work or not, women wanted their husbands to forbid them to work. Women themselves are supporters of the patriarchal family system in Korea.

Another example of a housewife was a 28-year-old former garment worker who had been married for six months. She married late for a Korean woman because she had needed to support her natal family. Her husband was a long-distance bus driver. He was home only two days a week, but he still did not want her to go to work. She did not want to work either, and explained:

I worked for eight years at a garment factory. I was the main supporter of my family while I was working, and so I could not quit. I got very sick after working for eight years. I lost a lot of weight and could not eat. My eyesight got bad because of sewing machine oil. By this time my father was earning more money so I was able to quit and stay at home and rest. Although I did not have any savings from the time I spent working, my parents provided me with a dowry. My husband now makes about 300,000 won a month, so I do not need to go back to factory work.

The attitude of former factory workers was that if a woman's husband made enough money to support her, it was best for her not to go back to work, especially factory work. Many were forced to change their minds when they needed money for their children's education or to buy their own house or apartment. None of the women whom I interviewed talked about personal satisfaction as a reason for returning to work.

Mrs. Kim, a 31-year-old former garment worker, wanted to go back to work but could not find any child care for her two boys (ages 2 and 5). She found her husband's salary was not sufficient to support her family (see chapter 7 for detail) but without child care for her two small children, she could not go back to work. She had to stay at home and make ends meet on her husband's meager salary, although they could have used another wage.

One option that was frequently pursued by women with very young children was doing "home work" in a putting out system. They were paid by piece rate, and usually earned 1,000 to 2,000 won a day. Even though these jobs were low-

paid, they were hard to get because so many women were available. Most housewives did not consider doing "home work" as real work since they did not leave their homes. They felt it was better than going to work in a factory because they could take care of their children. Their husbands were also less likely to object to their working at home.

A few women were able to marry into a higher social class, and permanently escape factory work. One former electronics worker who married well lived in a comfortable house in Pusan. Her husband was a college graduate and had a white collar job in a bank. After her marriage, she started a college correspondence course. She had already finished 2 years and was taking a leave of absence because of her children. She was determined to get a college diploma so she could match her husband's education.

She did not want to talk about her experience as a factory worker. She preferred to talk about her comfortable present life; about how much her house was worth, and about her children's piano lessons and private math lessons. She thought of herself as a middle class woman and tried to forget her experience as a factory worker. She would not dream of going back to factory work, and planned to open her own flower shop. She looked up to her husband and tried very hard to meet his standards. Although she felt that it was alright for a woman to have less education than her

husband, she wanted to be equal to her husband's friends' wives.

2. Returning to the labor force

In spite of their expectations to leave the labor force, many women had to return after getting married.⁸ Most of them returned to factory work, but a small number of women took other kinds of jobs (e.g. sales women, housemaids, market vendors, or proprietors of small restaurants). Most of them had to return to work because of financial reasons.

A woman who worked at a subcontracting factory outside the Zone went back to work right after her daughter was born because her husband's salary was insufficient. Her husband's wages were 270,000 won/month. She put aside 150,000 won of this every month toward buying an apartment. They also helped her parents-in-law, which left them only 100,000 won a month to live on. She said that she never thought of coming back to work again, after 10 years of working with a sewing machine. She had only had a primary school education, but she was a skilled sewing machine operator. After her daughter was born, she found that she needed more money to make ends meet, and she went back to work only 3 months later. Luckily, her mother was able to take care of her daughter. After she started to work, she used her wages to pay her mother, save for her daughter's education, and pay household expenses. They were able to

save after she started to work and they planned to buy a small apartment in 1991.

Her husband knew that they could not hope to buy an apartment without her income, but he would not acknowledge her contribution. She had to pretend that her husband supported his family and she did not earn any money. She had to be careful not to hurt her husband's pride, since he felt she was looking down on him after she went back to work.

Another woman worked for a subcontracting shoe maker which employed about 60 workers, most of whom were married women. She returned to work because her husband's salary was not enough to support their family, which included 2 children, her parents-in-law and her sister-in-law. Her parents-in-law took care of her children while she was at work. They made about 500,000 won/month between the two of them, but they were unable to save much of that.

One 32-year-old former electronics worker had to return to work because her husband died suddenly leaving her a widow with two small children. She worked in the Zone between 1972 and 1975. After three years, she quit to get married. She and her husband had run a small dress shop but she had to close the shop after her husband died. She and her children went to live with her parents after her husband's death and she went back to work in the Zone. She considered herself lucky to get another job at an

electronics factory. Her company was a Korean owned subcontracting firm which did work for several other companies in the Zone. It opened in 1983, and was unusual in that it employed more married women than unmarried women. The factory has a reputation for extremely harsh working conditions, and apparently had difficulty recruiting unmarried women as workers.⁹

She was the only female worker in the section where she worked. Her wage including overtime work was about 300,000 won which was very high. She identified totally with her factory and was sympathetic to her managers. She said that if anyone had complaints, they should leave the company instead of making trouble. Workers at this factory did not go on strike during the July-August labor uprising.

Most married women worked outside the Zone in subcontracting firms, or doing "homework" in a putting out system. Both of these forms of labor take advantage of the isolation of women in the home to pay low wages, and limit possibilities for organizing to improve conditions. These subcontracting companies employ mostly married women who, because of their age, cannot get jobs from the companies in the Zone. Married women who returned to the labor force would like to go back to the Zone. But, as one woman pointed out:

Big companies do not hire us, married women, that is why we wind up in subcontracting factories where there are no fringe benefits at all and no job security either.

Some women became proprietors of small businesses after getting married. These were usually very small scale enterprises that absorbed all of the couples' capital. A former electronics factory worker was running a tiny restaurant with her husband when I interviewed her. Even though she had to work for all day (12-15 hours a day) in the restaurant, she said that it was better than factory work since she was working for herself. She had worked for an electronics company for seven and half years before she quit to get married.

Her husband was a deep sea fisherman and he was often away for periods of up to a year even after they got married. After he left his fishing job, they started a small restaurant. The restaurant very small one, and only employed her and her husband. Their restaurant was not doing very well since there were so many competitors, and they were gradually losing their savings.

The life of one former garment worker shows how a woman goes in and out of factories all her life. Mrs. Yun (48) worked for five years (1972-1977) in the Zone before she left her job in order to run a small store with her husband at market. They worked as vendors for seven years. When her husband died in 1984 she went back to working in a factory. In 1987 she was working for a textile company outside the Zone. Her 23-year-old daughter was also working in the Zone for an electronics factory.

She lived with her son and daughter in two rooms for monthly rent. They had been separated for a while when they experienced real economic hardship after her husband's death. All three were earning wages so they were planning to move to better living quarters soon. She had worked all her life and was looking forward to retirement at age fifty-five. She was planning to run a small restaurant after her retirement.

An example of the social mobility through marriage that workers strive for, but rarely achieve is provided by a former electronics factory worker who married a manager in the company where she worked. Her husband is a college graduate who still works for the same company. Her case illustrates the conflicts between opportunities provided by participation in the labor force, and Confucian family values. While her children were still quite young, she took a job as an insurance sales woman. She continued to work despite her husband's vehement opposition and attained the position of assistant manager. Her husband refused to acknowledge that she was earning a substantial salary; he told her that she should be able to manage household expenses with his salary. He said that she went out to work only for her personal satisfaction since their family did not need the income. He accused her of neglecting him and their two children because of her work.

In spite of her success in both her marriage and her

career, things have not worked out well for her. Although unlike most factory workers, she has managed to achieve some class mobility, she is still caught in the restrictions of the Korean family system. The limitations placed on a middle class housewife directly confront the ambition which enabled her to achieve her successes (cf. Robotham 1973; Zaretsky 1978). She has had marital problems ever since she started to work, but she remains determined to work.

D. Conclusion: The Myth of Social Mobility

Korean women are constrained by patriarchy and capitalism, but how individual women are affected depends on their class position. New forms of economic exploitation are introduced by factory jobs. Although these have been structured around traditional idioms of gender subordination, these new forms are based on capitalist relations rather than family ones. Working in the Zone allows unmarried women workers a short respite from domination by the family, but the low wages that they receive only allow them a brief taste of consumerism. The time spent working in the Zone also delays marriage for most women workers, but they must use much of their earnings to reinvest in the family system by saving for a dowry. A large dowry gives a woman a better chance to get married to a man from a good class background.

Most women workers try to use marriage as a strategy to

improve their status. How successful a woman is likely to be at this depends upon her class background. Women who have better class backgrounds receive more education, and usually work in electronics factories rather than garment factories. Some electronics workers were able to make good marriages to white collar workers. They could stay at home as housewives or get jobs other than factory work. Most garment workers married either factory workers or other blue collar workers. They only stayed home because they did not have any other way to care for their children. Their families often had severe financial needs, but mothers of young children could not go back to work unless they could use their extended families for child care. Women made their choices from the options available to them.

Women married to middle class men have some measure of economic security, but at the cost of restrictions on their freedom made by the traditional patriarchal family. Confucian ideals have always been beyond the means of poor families, and the income from women employed in factories has enabled some of these families to meet these standards better. Because of Confucian gender ideology, however, the contribution of women is not acknowledged by their families. Working class husbands cannot guarantee economic security for their wives, but in order to maintain their position as patriarchs they have to deny that they need their wives' income. In these cases women are exploited both as workers

and as wives. Their employment outside the home intensifies the existing forms of gender subordination at home (cf. Rubin 1976; Sen 1980).

The myth that social mobility is possible continues to exist among young women workers since a few workers do marry well. My data show that a woman's class background affects the trajectory of her involvement in the labor force. Women who have worked in garment factories are more likely to return to working in factories after their marriages. These women are skilled sewing machine workers, but most of them have had only primary school or junior high school education. On the other hand, former workers in electronics factories come back to work in smaller numbers. Compared to garment workers, electronics workers usually have had more education, most are high school graduates. Because of her education, a worker in an electronics factory is in a better position to marry a man from a better class background. Young women workers still strongly believe that they will leave factory work behind when they get married. Nevertheless, most women find that marriage is unable to improve their class position. It is these workers whose experience of being trapped at the bottom of the class system reveals the dark side of the "Korean Economic Miracle."

Notes

1. The protected status that women are promised under "classic patriarchy" may offer real benefits to some women even though it is part of a system which oppresses women in general. For further discussion, see Johnson (1983), Kandiyoti (1988), and Wolf (1972).
2. Some married women workers are constrained by family obligations and forced to sell their labor through system of "homework." This represents a case comparable in many ways to the Indian lacemakers in Narsapur described by Mies (1982).
3. Companies encourage dating, and benefit from women's expectations for marriage. As a consequence of women marrying and leaving the labor force, companies experience regular turnover in their labor force.
4. The term dowry refers to the money spent for ritual silk for groom, in-laws, plus all the paraphernalia needed to furnish new couple's room and kitchen (e.g. wardrobe, T.V., refrigerator, gas stove, all the utensils, etc.)
5. Nearly two thirds (63%) of the 675 unmarried women who answered my questionnaire responded that the man's character was the most important factor in selecting a prospective husband. 72 (11%) answered the man's wealth was most important. 31 (5%) answered the man's education. 91 (13%) answered the man's family background. 31 (5%), all Protestants, answered the man's religion was most important.
6. Only sixteen percent of the married women who answered my questionnaire could stay at home as housewives.
7. Sixty four percent of the married women who answered the questionnaire said that they left the job market when they got married while nearly ninety percent of the unmarried women said planned to leave their jobs upon marriage.
8. Eighty-four percent of married women who responded to my questionnaire had returned to the labor force after they got married.
9. She said the reasons they preferred to employ married women were: First, married women did not change their jobs easily; second, unmarried women complained about working conditions too much; third, married women did not complain about overtime work at all since they all needed money. This factory required two-hour overtime work every day except Saturday. Workers also had to work on Sundays at least once or twice a month.

CHAPTER VI. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LABOR UNIONS IN MASAN

A. Introduction

The labor policy of the Korean government over the past thirty years has been subordinated to its goals of economic development (Kim Y.H. 1981).¹ Workers have been regarded primarily as a means to achieve aims of production and exports. Their welfare received attention only when it was necessary in order to improve productivity. The government's export-led development strategy relied on the workers' acceptance of low wages, long working hours, along with low labor militancy, and enabled business firms to make immense profits. Workers were ideologically manipulated and physically exploited, but benefited little from the economic development. The government employed the ideology of "growth before distribution," which was been used for "anti-labor" and "low-wage" policies (Cho, S.K. 1987:41).

The Korean labor law went through four changes since the policy of export-led development was put into effect. The labor laws in 1963; the laws under the Special Measures for Safeguarding National Security from 1971 to 1974; the revision of labor laws in December 1980; and the revision of labor laws in 1986 and 1987. Each of these changes followed a change in the political regime: the military coup d'etat in May 1961; the imposition of the Yushin (revitalization)

system in October 1972; the military coup d'etat in May 1980; and the disturbances leading up to the birth of the Sixth Republic in 1987. In each phase the labor law always formally acknowledged the rights of workers to free association, collective action, and collective bargaining, however in practice, workers were prevented from exercising those rights.

Because the government regarded the labor movement as a threat and a hinderance to economic development, it sought to suppress the movement on the grounds of national security. The government's suppression of any organization seeking to improve working conditions and wages enabled business firms to ignore workers' grievances. Workers who took collective action were opposed not only by the management of their companies but also by the government. Workers' frustration with government repression of moderate tactics has led to increasing radicalism within the labor movement (Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development 1987).

During the 1960s most Korean workers were willing to defer their expectations and trust government slogans. In the 1970s, however, when improvements in their lives were still not forthcoming, there was increasing resentment of unequal income distribution and poor working conditions. Even though low wages were a serious problem, the issue of "human dignity" was the more pressing issue during this

period, and unionization was frequently motivated by moral issues such as the right "to be treated like a human being" rather than economic issues like wage increases.² After twenty years of hard work, there was increasing awareness of "their contradictory position in the development path as participants and as losers" (Lim 1982:181). And finally, in the 1980s, workers organized a nation wide uprising against government and business interests.

Throughout this period, Korean workers never questioned the validity of capitalism. After the Korean War, communism and socialism were discredited in South Korea. Workers did not link their effort to achieve improvements in their economic and working conditions to any alternative ideology. Thus the actions taken by industrial workers prior to 1987 did not result in a coordinated strategy to achieve political power.

In this chapter, I examine the recent labor history of Korea, and delineate the underlying causes for the recent labor uprising. The Korean workers, who had been well disciplined and trained to be subordinate to their superiors, suddenly stood up against the government and their employers. This chapter also examines the timing of the labor uprising and the involvement of women workers in the labor movement.

B. The Recent History of Labor Movement in Korea

1. Early Period (Before 1960)

The establishment of labor unions in Korea was the result of political/ideological factors as well as economic factors (Cho, S.H. 1984:121). Industrial wage labor began during the last phase of the Yi Dynasty (before 1910), and rapidly developed with the opening of the port cities of Korea. Along with the increase in the number of wage laborers, the first labor unions were organized in the port cities at the end of the 19th century and spread throughout the nation during the early 20th century (Kim, K.S. 1986:23). During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), the labor movement was closely connected with the independence movement, and took on political goals (Kim Yun-hwan 1982:343; Hanguk Minjungsa Yonguhoe, 1986, II p.181-188).³

During the 1930s, the power of the organized labor movement strengthened, and collective action took violent forms as the colonial government tried to suppress it. Thus, "the labor movement became more radical, aligned with the left-wing union leadership" (Kim Y.H. 1982:342). After independence, the labor movement divided into right- and left-wing political factions. The first national trade union, "Choson Nodong Chohap Chonguk Pyonguihoe," was organized in 1945. This national federation of unions grew to more than 500,000 members. Their stated goals were to

achieve "a minimum wage," "an eight-hour day," "the abolishment of child labor," and "the abolishment of discrimination against sex and age" (Hanguk Minjungsa Yonguhoe 1986 II:252). The American Military Government crushed Choson Nodong Chohap Chonguk Pyonguihoe because it opposed the left wing political views of its leadership. Unions organized under the Rhee Syng-man regime were controlled by the ruling political party (Choi 1983:46).⁴ The Federation of Korean Trade Unions (established in 1946) was essentially a tool of the Liberal Party government and the labor movement was strongly colored by its political connections.

In March 1953, four basic labor-related laws were enacted--the Labor Standard Law, the Labor Union Law, the Labor Dispute Adjustment Law, and the Labor Committees Law. These laws, however, were not appropriate to the actual labor-management relations in Korea at the time. Rather, they were adopted as imitations of the advanced countries' legislation. During the Rhee regime, the Korean economy had a huge surplus of unskilled labor, and unions could do little to improve the welfare of workers. Wages were so low that wives and minor children had to work in order to support their families. "The wage workers received comprised only half of their family expenses" (Hanguk Minjungsa Yonguhoe, 1986, II, p.274). Workers who had any jobs at all felt lucky and were willing to tolerate low

wages and long working hours.

2. The First Phase of Export-led Development (1960s)

The military government which took power in 1961 was strongly opposed to many of the positions held by labor unions, and was essentially anti-democratic. When the government finally established its economic development policy in 1963, the Labor Standard Law, the Labor Union Law, and the Labor Disputes Adjustment Law were revised. The revision in 1963 aimed at preventing the establishment of unions by enterprise and organizing them into a centralized system, which would be easily controlled. This system contrasted with the organizational pattern in the previous regime in which labor unions were mostly enterprise unions, fragmented into numerous small units (Cho, S. 1989: Ch.5; Choi 1983: 48-51).⁵

The military government adopted economic development and export promotion as its paramount goals. To fulfill these goals, government policies attempted to suppress the growth of labor unions which might threaten economic performance. In order to attract foreign investment, the government also outlawed strikes in foreign owned firms. In the 1960s, serious labor problems did not arise, because employment increased sharply as a result of the steady progress of export-led growth. Most workers were satisfied with the job opportunities given to them despite the low wages. They thought of themselves as part of a new force

that would get rid of poverty in Korea. Thus, they cooperated with the government's policy of low wages and long working hours.

3. Dualistic Structure of the Labor Movement (1970s & 1980s)

While industrial workers seemed passive and deferential to governmental policy in the first phase of Korean export-led development, by the 1970s the conflicts that had been latent in the industrialization process began to emerge. Ten years of rapid and unbalanced economic growth led to a sharp increase in labor disputes. The Korean government met the implied challenge to its authority with extreme repression. Strict labor control was applied in an effort to generate a high growth rate.

In December 1971 the government enacted a series of laws concerning Special Measures for Safeguarding National Security which severely curtailed all union activity. The measures treated the labor movement as a threat to national security, and made collective bargaining and collective action by labor unions impossible. Strikes were also made illegal.

The Yushin government (1972-1979) guaranteed the permanent rule of President Park Chung Hee and sharply curtailed civil rights. It reduced the scope of union activity, but allowed unions to grow under government control, and used unions to carry out government policy

toward workers.⁶

Even with this tight governmental control on labor unions, political struggles did not disappear completely. A few collective actions such as strikes were carried out during the first half of the 1970s (Kim, K.S. 1986:57), and the end of the decade saw an increasing number of strikes. There were "133 cases in 1975, 110 cases in 1976, 96 cases in 1977, 102 cases in 1978, 105 cases in 1979, and in 1980, it reached 407 cases" (ibid.:59). Strikes were illegal during this period, so these numbers indicate a significant level of discontent on the part of workers.

Labor militancy increased exponentially in the 1970s after the Chon Tae-il incident dramatized workers' plight.⁷ On November 13th 1970, a 23-year-old garment worker in Seoul committed suicide by burning himself. Chon's death was the first of many suicides to come afterwards, for the purpose of gaining publicity for the laborer's desperate situation. His death marked a turning point in the Korean labor movement since it pointed toward an increasingly militant and committed activism. Chon's mother, Yi So-son was acclaimed as the symbolic "mother" of Korean laborers after her son's death. She continues to work for what her son could not achieve while he was alive.

The direct involvement of students and church organizations in the struggle of workers rights began with the Chon incident. Before that event, the student movement

had focused mostly on fighting for democracy against the military dictatorship. Following his death, the student movement and labor movement aligned themselves against many policies of the military government.

In the late 1970s, informal labor movements were organized around religious bodies since the formal labor movement had failed in its efforts to represent workers' rights and interests. Consequently, the Korean labor movement was characterized by a divided structure consisting of, on the one hand, a formal or official structure (i.e. Federation of Korean Trade Unions); and on the other, an informal or underground one (i.e. UIM and JOC groups). UIM stands for Urban Industrial Mission and is sponsored by the Protestant Church. JOC stands for "Young Catholic Workers' Organization," ("JOC," from the French "Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne") and is sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church. These two groups spoke out on issues of distribution and criticized the state growth policy. This opposition intensified in the early 1980s and was evident in the recent labor struggle.⁸

During this period, Church organizations played a crucial role in awakening the consciousness of factory workers. Particularly during the Yushin period (1972-1979), while the government became increasingly oppressive, the Church associations were the sole advocates of free, autonomous labor unions. The structure of Church groups

expanded to include a variety of activities on behalf of workers' rights. Rights recognized by church groups included education for factory workers, welfare activities, and the publicizing of labor issues. Furthermore, Church groups provided the only places where workers in trouble could go to seek assistance.

The Church groups' activities and structures evolved in a decentralized form, because they were derived from independently operating denominations (Choi 1983:122). The role of Church organizations changed as the political situation changed over the last three decades. The more repressive the government became, the more radical the Church organizations response. During the 1960s, Church groups became involved with industrial issues as a way of expanding church membership (Cho, S.H. 1981). In the 1970s, they began to link the attainment of religious salvation directly to social justice. Nevertheless, the UIM and JOC groups did not attempt to translate specific industrial demands into general, political demands. Nor did they question capitalism and the capitalist ethic or offer alternative ideological orientation (Hanguk Kidoggyo Kyohoe Hyobuihoe 1984). At first, church leadership focussed their efforts on short term economic demands and promoted the government's objectives of industrial peace and productivity. Their course of action changed drastically in the 1980s: both UIM and JOC began to question capitalism

and became increasingly more politically oriented. No one could remain politically neutral in the 1980s and church organizations were no exception.

In the period of about six months after President Park's assassination (November 1979 - May 1980), there were over 400 strikes. The relaxation of the political restrictions of the Yushin period led many unions to try to reorganize as democratic unions and elect their own representatives. The coup d'etat of May 1980 quickly ended these hopes. The new regime enacted the "purification in labor union law" and destroyed all the existing democratic unions. The union leaders were either arrested or sent to the "purification camp." At purification camp, union leaders were tortured and subjected to hard labor.⁹ Thus, strikes became impossible again during the early 1980s.

The labor policy of the Fifth Republic (President Chun regime, 1980-1987) emphasized the use of joint labor-management conferences to prevent labor disputes. The main point of the revised laws was that labor unions could be organized without receiving prior approval from the government. However new unions had to file for approval with the authorities and this approval was usually withheld. Union activities were further restricted by regulations requiring such things as formal reporting of labor disputes and a cooling-off period. In the early 1980s, union membership actually declined from 20% in 1980 to 15.7% in

1985. This decline reflected workers' frustration with the formal labor unions which were prevented from acting as advocates of workers' rights (Cho, S. 1989: Ch.5).

The government was forced to revise its labor laws again in December 1986 because the activities of informal labor movements increased as workers attempted to bypass the existing control system. Consequently, labor union activity was somewhat liberalized. In 1987 the government further liberalized labor-related laws as a part of the ruling party's election strategy. This included what was called the "Law of Legal Minimum Wages," although because the minimum wage was to vary according to the type of industry and labor productivity, labor organizations opposed its enactment.¹⁰

4. Women Workers in the Labor Movement

The 1970s saw a sharp increase in the number of female workers employed in the manufacturing sector (Kim, K.S. 1986:32). Between 1966 and 1978 female participation in the manufacturing labor force grew from 33.6% to 46.1% (Choi 1983:82). Female workers' experience was even harsher than that of male workers since they had to work longer hours and at lower wages. Female workers' wages in the manufacturing sector average less than half those of male workers (Kim, K.S. 1986:73; Korean Association of Women Workers 1987:32). As in other parts of the world, female labor is treated as providing supplementary income and is concentrated in

unskilled, simple, repetitive jobs, which are the lowest paid jobs. According to the statistics provided by the Labor Ministry for 1985, female workers work an average of 238.1 hours/month and 40.5 hours overtime while male workers in the manufacturing sector work an average of 234.9 hours/month and 38 hours overtime. In the same year the ILO reported that Korean women worked the longest hours of any women in the developing countries in Asia (ILO 1985).

During the 1970s the labor movement was not led by the formal national labor organization, but was spontaneous and unorganized. Women workers sustained the Korean labor movement during the 1970s and became increasingly important after 1975. Sin In-ryong contends that from 1975 to 1980, only the women workers' movement was significant, and that during the repressive period immediately following the coup d'etat in 1980, women's labor movements were the only ones that existed (1985:51).

The activism of the Dong-il textile workers became famous in the 1970s. Despite the fact that nearly all textile workers are women, none of the textile factories ever had a woman union president until 1972 when the Dong-il textile workers elected a woman as president of their union. Before this time, the union, which was organized in 1946, had always had a man as president. In 1972, 1,200 out of 1,300 Dong-il textile union members were women (Former Dong-il Labor Union 1985:32). After they elected a woman as

president, management was able to co-opt most of their male co-workers and repressed the union continuously.

The "nude incident" of 1976 showed the desperation of women workers in their struggle. Management had called in the combat police to remove the striking workers from factory property. The workers believed that if they stripped off their clothes, the police would not touch them. They stripped off their clothes, but the police arrested them anyway. These women turned female vulnerability into a weapon in their struggle for workers rights. The "nude incident" shocked Korean society. The women received widespread sympathy, and the public condemned the police for arresting them.

Another famous incident, "human feces case" happened during their union president election in 1978. Male workers tried to interfere with the election, and came into the union office where they rubbed women workers' breasts and faces with feces. Their humiliation was well publicized by media, church organizations, and their own publicity. Most union officers were fired and the union was destroyed in 1980. Furthermore, none of the former union members were able to get jobs at other factories since they were all blacklisted.

The "YH incident" was another case that showed women workers' militant activism. The YH company was first established in 1966 to manufacture wigs for export. By

1970, the company was the biggest wig company in Korea employing 4,000 workers and exported over US \$1,000,000 (Former YH Labor Union 1984:19).

After three attempts, women workers finally succeeded in organizing a labor union in 1975 and elected a woman as president. The management tried to destroy the union by co-opting the union officers and by sponsoring male supervisors to organize another union. Due to excessive expansion and fraudulent activity of the management, the company began to decline and declared bankruptcy in 1979. In April of that year it announced its closing. The union officers visited the Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Finance, and commercial banks asking for their help in keeping the company open. When they could not receive any help from government institutions, they thought of a more radical approach, and went to the opposition party's office, occupied their building, and demanded their help. This was the first time that a political party became directly involved in a labor problem. They hoped that making this a political issue would contribute to the solution of their problems. This case also revealed how little workers trusted the formal labor union institute (Federation of Korean Labor Unions), since they never tried to involve them in negotiations. Eventually, the police came into the building, and arrested everyone who was there. During the arrest, a young woman died of unknown causes.

Factors contributing to female initiated labor movements in the 1970s can be listed as follows (Sin 1985:52-54):

1. Female workers historically had participated in the labor movement.
2. Women workers were working under worse conditions than male workers. They received less than half of the male wage and were mistreated by both male managers and male production workers.
3. The labor struggle during the 1970s was severely repressed by the government, so organizers had to risk being fired or imprisoned. Female workers cost their families less, if they were unable to find industrial employment because their wages were so low to begin with. Furthermore, almost all workers leave their work upon marriage, thus, the record of imprisonment would not be serious for women who would not be working in the formal sectors again. Finally, female workers' working conditions were so bad, life in prison was little worse than life outside of it.
4. Compared to male workers, female workers have marriage as an escape and most of them have their families in the rural area to which they can go back if worse comes to worst. This might be a hinderance for the labor movement in the long run, but it made it possible for women organizers to be more militant in the short run.
5. Religious organizations (both Protestants and Catholics) influenced women workers. Since the end of the 1960s, these religious organizations have helped industrial laborers, especially female workers, to learn about their rights to organize, and raising their consciousness.

Even though women workers made significant contributions to the labor movement in the 1970s, their role diminished in the 1980s. As political opposition to the regime of Chun Doo-hwan grew, its ability to control its opponents decreased. Labor activism increased, especially

in the heavy industries where almost all workers were men. The leadership role within the labor movement was taken by these male workers. At the same time, the women who had been labor activists in the 1970s left factory work to get married, and tight government control of labor ensured that the next cohort did not take their place. Women workers had shorter careers in the industrial sector, and as a consequence it was more difficult for their organizations to sustain themselves. Another difficulty was that the activity in the 1970s was organized to meet specific problems and did not cohere into an organized program. Therefore, problems of women workers were not clearly understood as problems of all workers.

C. The 1987 Labor Uprising and the Formation of Unions

1. National Background

On June 29th 1987, in the midst of constant anti-government demonstrations, demanding "direct presidential elections," and "an end to the military dictatorship," the ruling party's presidential candidate No Tae Woo was pushed to announce the "June 29 Declaration." His declaration, however, made no mention of the rights of laborers, farmers, and urban poor. But it provided an opening in the rigid facade of the military regime. Workers grabbed the opportunity to exercise their rights, and demanded "democratic labor unions," "wage increases," and "better

working conditions."

The nationwide uprising began on July 5th, in Ul-san at a subsidiary of Hyun-dae. The workers organized a democratic labor union, which sparked similar movements in other Hyun-dae subsidiaries. By August, the struggle had spread around the country to workers in the other large conglomerates, and eventually workers in small and medium sized companies became involved. Between June and September, there were over 3,000 labor disputes reported nation-wide (Kyounggyang Daily News, September 14, 1987). According to the Ministry of Labor's statistics, disputes occurred at a rate averaging 44 cases a day. This was 58 times higher than in 1986 (0.76 case a day) (Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, 1987:44). The events of 1987 are characterized as the first mass labor struggle to occur in Korean history.

The demands made during the uprising went beyond the demand for wage increases and better working conditions to include workers' rights to organize labor unions, and democratize existing management-run unions. Unfair dismissals, interference with unionization, and other unfair labor practices were also issues. Workers demanded the right to organize labor unions and the abolishment of the existing management-run unions (Hanguk Kidoggyo Sahoe Munje Yonguwon 1987:47).

The July-August labor uprising revealed growing

national support for the movement. Most of the disputes were of a large size, nation-wide, and took place during a short period of time; the uprising was led by workers, not by a small number of activists. And it was backed by a strong nationalist movement of which the student political movement was also a part. Actions were taken before demands were presented, rather than the other way round. In most of the disputes, sit-ins preceded negotiations (ibid. 48-49). This reflected workers' assessment about the futility of discussions with management and illustrated the effect of government policies which deprived workers of effective representation. Resolutions were equally dramatic as management was usually able to satisfy the fairly modest demands made by the workers. According to Cho "These disputes and settlements reflect the unique characteristics of Korea and provide evidence that industrial order has yet to be firmly established" (1989, ch.5).

2. The Labor Uprising in the Masan Area

Early in August, the movement reached Chang-won, a heavy industrial estate which employs mostly male workers. Workers in Chang-won started strikes demanding democratic unions and wage increases. This uprising provided inspiration for female workers in nearby Masan, where unions were banned. By September, more than half of the companies (41 out of 73) operating in the Masan Free Export Zone, had experienced sit-in strikes. The four main demands of the

workers were, wage and bonus increases, better treatment, improvement in working conditions, and seniority allowances.

The events at T.C. Electronics Company are typical of what occurred in the Zone during the uprising. T.C., the largest U.S. based company in Masan, was established in 1972, 100% owned by the Tandy Corporation. Its main products were stereo components, telephones and computer components. In 1987, the company had 1,800 employees including 1,700 female workers. Its 100 male employees were mostly managers and technicians. In the afternoon of August 20, about 1,000 workers started an spontaneous strike demanding higher wages. In the evening, 70 workers gathered to organize a union. Unions benefitted from each others experience, and could organize quickly because they were part of a mass movement. At 9:30 the next day the workers registered their union at City Hall and continued with the strike. Management announced that the factory would be closed for two days. At 12:30, the union leaders announced their union organization, to 300 workers and 250 more workers joined the union. They received opposition from male technicians who came and told them "Stop the strike and talk to the president. ... We will try to solve your problems if you promise to disband the union." Union representatives met with the company president that evening and presented him with the following list of demands, typical of those being presented by unions in Masan at that

time:

- 1) increase of daily wages (1,000 won)
- 2) increase of annual bonus (600%)
- 3) seniority allowance
- 4) paid summer vacation
- 5) abolishment of the "line-leader" position
- 6) observance of monthly allowance and physiological allowance (1 day off)
- 7) abolishment of mandatory overtime and Sunday work
- 8) expansion of medical facility
- 9) presents on Labor Day.

Of the union's major demands, management only agreed to abolish mandatory overtime work. Negotiations over wage levels broke off because management considered the amounts of the increases being demanded to be too high. After the negotiations, male technicians approached the union officers and tried to persuade them to abandon the union: "Do you know anything about the Labor Law?" They questioned them. "Our parent company in the U.S. does not have a union, and if you start one, the company will surely move the plant to another country. Then who is going to support 1,800 workers? Forget the union, we can work with the Labor-Management Conference System."

After this confrontation, management made some concessions to the workers' demands for higher wages: Wages and bonuses were increased by about half the amount the

union had demanded. However, management also insisted that the union be disbanded. All of the workers withdrew from the union except for its three officers. Management sent these three union officers to a special training program and transferred them away from the production line.

Most strikes in Masan were unorganized and motivated by the need for higher wages. Management accepted the inevitability of increasing wages and bonuses, and went along with this and the other basic demands of the workers. However, allowing permanent labor unions to organize was another matter. After the initial disputes were settled, management was able to persuade many workers to withdraw from the unions. Most workers were not aware of the importance of labor unions. For workers, paying union dues, even though they were very low, seemed like one more burden. Most of the unions were easily taken over by the management or disbanded. In the few cases where management encountered strong resistance, they organized male workers to threaten and physically abuse their female co-workers. In one exceptional case, management was able to turn female workers against the union organizers. These workers were told that they would be laid off because the union had frightened the parent company into cancelling its orders. There were only six democratic unions that survived until the end of the year. Even this small number, however, represented a significant gain, since no unions of any kind had been

allowed before 1987.

3. The Continuation of the Struggle

The 1987 experience taught workers a valuable lesson about how to organize themselves to fight against management, and when they faced another labor struggle in March 1988, the women workers of Masan were able to organize more quickly and effectively. Union activities led to significantly higher factory wages in Masan, from \$4/day in 1987 to \$7/day in 1988. Workers' consciousness has also increased greatly in the past few years. Higher wages and increased union activities of women workers, however, have made the Masan Free Export Zone less attractive to its foreign investors.

During 1988, workers seeking to unionize the company clashed with anti-union supervisors controlled by management at the T.C. Electronics factory. Several union women required hospitalization, but the labor union survived the confrontation. By mid 1988, about half of the women workers had joined the union. The management of T.C. Electronics was disturbed by these developments and began to talk about closing down. The chairman of the Tandy Corporation in the U.S. threatened to move some production lines out of Korea because of the "general level of cultural change and political uncertainty" (quoted in The New York Times August 26, 1988). However, he also stated that the company did not plan to pull out of Korea.

Management warned workers that orders from the parent company were decreasing. They instituted a hiring freeze in Masan, and tried to move machines to subcontracting factories outside the zone. Union members threw themselves in front of the movers in an effort to stop the removal of the machines from the factory. Management sued the union for its role in blocking the removal of equipment, and for obstructing daily procedures on the shop floor in February 1989.

Both sides hardened their positions during these confrontations. Management accused the union members of slowing down productivity so that they could not rely on their workers to produce goods in time to meet shipping deadlines. The union accused management of hiring thugs to disrupt the operations of the factory so that T.C Electronics could use "declining productivity" as an excuse to close. T.C Electronics also described the confrontations at the factory as being between men and women workers, and thus unrelated to management policies.

In April 1989, the workers' worst fear came to pass. Tandy Corporation declared that it was closing its factory in Masan and dismissed its entire staff. They paid the wages for April and the legal severance payment (2 months wages) to workers following the legal requirements for closing the factory.

The core membership of the union refused to accept the

plant closing and occupied the factory building. They demanded that the company reopen the plant. When they were ignored by Tandy, about 20 workers went to T.C.'s research institute in Seoul. They found the company president in the institute and took him hostage. They held him for four days before he escaped. Their demand for direct negotiations with the parent company in the U.S. indicated that they still felt that the problems that had occurred in the Masan factory were due to local mismanagement rather than being intrinsic to the structural problems of export processing zones. Perhaps if the head office understood their desperation it would be sympathetic and reopen the factory. However, the union's kidnapping the president of their Korean subsidiary did not convince Tandy to negotiate, but rather confirmed them in their decision to close their factory.

Since Tandy is an American company, its conflict with Korean workers became linked to nationalist issues which were important in Korean politics. Radical nationalists objected to the presence of large numbers of American troops in Korea, to the ties between the United States and South Korea's unpopular military government, and to the presence of foreign-owned companies in Masan. Strikers against Tandy incorporated Anti-American sentiments in their protests. They walked on American flags and chanted anti-American slogans, "If you want to leave, Yankees, then go. But repay

all the profits you exploited from our blood and sweat for seventeen years." In spite of these elements of anti-Americanism, the union's primary goal was always to have the factory reopen in Masan.

The attitude taken by the international business community to Korean activism was nicely illustrated by The Economist which reported: "A few militants have pressed absurd demands. One American company, which eventually gave up and decided to close its factory, was told by a union organizer that it should not be allowed to leave Korea until it had repaid all the profits it had ever made there" (Economist, Vol. 315 no. 7654, 12-18 May 1990:p.33).

The more radical union activists were not surprised by Tandy's intransigence. They were interested in organizing workers as part of a larger struggle, and considered the closing of factories in the Masan Free Export Zone to be inevitable, if not desirable. For radicals the problem was a much larger one than whether one factory would remain open or not.

Eventually the hopelessness of the union's position became clear, and the workers occupying the factory began to leave. There were only about 50 workers still in the factory when police came in and forced them out of the factory in December 1989. In 1990, the union president Kim Chong-im and 21 workers were in jail and their fight with Tandy was finished.

Tandy was the first major investor to pull out of Masan, but several other large companies have left, or threatened to leave the zone. Sumida Electronics left MAFEZ in 1989 without paying overdue wages and severance payment. If Tandy corporation closed its factory following all the "legal" procedure, Sumida did not even bother to follow that course. The owner of Sumida Electronics left Korea without any warning to workers and sent a fax announcing its bankruptcy (AMPO Vol.21 No.4 (1990):59).

Sumida Electronics was established in 1972, 100 percent owned by the Japanese Sumida Electronics company. As of 1987, the company had about 2,000 employees of whom 1,700 were women workers. The workers of Sumida first tried to organize their union in 1986, the first time it was legal to organize unions in MAFEZ. Management, however, was able to prevent them from registering the union at City Hall by obstructing and threatening the union officials. They fired one woman who was a union officers at this time.

After this experience, women workers of Sumida were quick to organize in 1987 and were able to recruit 1,600 workers as union members. Their union was one of the strongest in the Zone and published a monthly newsletter entitled Ham Song (Shout). Through the newsletter, they tried to educate workers about unions and workers' rights. They also exposed the management's strategy to destroy the union and asked for workers' unity.

After the uprising in 1987, Sumida stopped hiring new workers completely and tried to reduce its workforce through voluntary resignation. They agreed to pay two months wages in addition to the retirement allowance if workers put in voluntary resignation papers. Many workers were afraid that the company would close so they left the company with whatever management offered them. Most of the young workers, who were under 23 or 24, thought of voluntary resignation as a chance to quit early so that they would be able to get jobs at other factories without too much problem. However, older workers who had been at Sumida for a long time did not see any chance to move to other factories. Most of them were involved in the union more seriously.

By the end of 1989, there were only 500 workers left in Sumida. It was very clear that the management was going to leave the MAFEZ, but nobody thought that the management would close the plant without discussing it with union officers. After the plant closing, the union officers got together and organized a negotiation team to go to Japan. Only after demonstrations and public outcry in both Korean and Japanese newspapers were the union officers able to go to Japan, and force Sumida to send the overdue wages to workers. A year after the plant closing, workers' representatives are still continuing their struggle against Sumida with sit-ins and hunger strikes (ibid: 60).

While workers in Masan were successful in organizing unions to achieve higher wages and better working conditions, they were unable to stop multinational corporations from leaving Korea looking for cheaper, unorganized labor. Both Tandy and Sumida simply packed up and left in 1989. The events at Tandy were complicated by cultural misunderstandings between workers and the parent company, and contradictory objectives among the union leaders. Nevertheless, the departure of additional companies points to the need to address the structural problems inherent in multinational corporations' exploitation of women workers in export processing zones throughout the world. Workers remain vulnerable to exploitation as long as they remain unorganized in their struggle with large powerful adversaries.

Notes

1. A good discussion of the relationship between government labor policy and its high growth policy is found in Kim Yun-hwan (1981) "Nosa kwangye 35nyon ui hoego wa chonmang," (Retrospect and Prospect of 35 years of Labor-Management Relationships) Hanguk Nodong Nyongam 81.

2. See, Hanguk Kidoggyo Kyohoehyobuihoe (The National Council of Churches in Korea--KNCC), Dosisanop Songyomunje Josabogoso (Survey Report on the Problems of Urban-Industrial Mission) (Seoul: The KNCC, 1979: 49-50).

3. After 1920 women workers tried to develop their own labor movement by either participating in labor unions organized by men or organizing their own unions (Lee Hyo-chae 1983). A detailed life history of a woman union leader for this period is given by Lee Ae-suk (1989), "Chung Chong-myong ui Samgwa Tujaeng" [The Life and Struggle of Chung Chong-myong], Yosong 3: 255-280.

4. A history of the early period of the labor union movement in Korea is found in Kim Nag-jung and Kim Yun-hwan, Hanguk Nodong Undongsa--History of Korean Labor Movement, Seoul: Iljogak, 1970; Hanguk Nodongjohap Chongyonmaeng (FKTU), Hanguk Nodong Chohap Undongsa--History of Korean Labor Union Movement, Seoul: Koreasojok, 1979.

5. In order to control labor unions from the top, the government required that it approve the establishment of any new unions, and the numerous firm-based local unions were rearranged to form 16 centralized industry based unions.

6. Under the Yushin government the Labor Standard Law was revised to protect the workers, a Vocational Training Law was enacted which required firms of a specific size to provide vocational training, and the government adopted measures to help the workers financially by treating their savings deposits preferentially.

7. Details about Chon Tae-il's life are provided in Chon Tae-il Pyongjon.

8. For the activities of religious organizations in this period, see Hanguk Kidoggyo Kyohoe Hyobuihoi (1984), Nodong Hyonjang kwa Chungon [The Scene of Labor and Testimony], Seoul: Pulbit; Hanguk Catholic Nodong Chongnyonhoe (JOC, 1986), Hanguk Catholic Nodong Chongnyonhoe, 25 Nyonsa [The Twenty-Five Year History of JOC], Seoul: Bundo Chulpansa; Cho Seung-hyok (1981), Dosi Sanobsongyo ui Insik [Recognition of the Urban Industrial Mission], Seoul: Minjungsa.

9. The details about these camps only began to emerge after President Chun left office.

10. Korean Association of Women Workers took the position that "the minimum wage should not be determined by labor productivity" (1987).

CHAPTER VII. WHAT THE LABOR UNION MEANS TO WOMEN WORKERS

A. Introduction

In spite of government repression of labor unions during the 1970s, women workers struggled to keep their unions alive (Karl and Choi 1983). Their militant actions challenged the gender ideology that molded the subordinate status of female labor. As Korean society has changed, women workers have become "increasingly sophisticated in their understanding of society and in their effort to promote improved working conditions" (Pak 1983:3). In effect, the restrictions imposed by the government on collective action radicalized Korean women workers.

The labor unions with women leaders had a reputation for being more democratic, progressive, and militant than those led by men. The strikes led by those unions were mostly spontaneous and militant. Their goals were not only to achieve better working conditions, to organize their own democratic unions, but also to confront male union bureaucrats, employers, and police (ibid; Sin 1985).

During the 1970s, the labor policy adopted by Japanese owned companies in MAFEZ was one which coerced workers into loyalty to the company and was backed by threats of lay-offs. Management enforced a demerit system, according to which a worker would be laid-off if she reached a certain point on the demerit scale. The criteria for measurement in

the demerit system were "sincerity, cooperation with the company, efficiency, attendance, and loyalty to the company." (The Committee for Justice and Peace of South Korea 1976:60). This led the workers to compete with each other. In addition to coercive labor practices, the Japanese supervisors exhibited an attitude of racial superiority toward Korean workers. Workers confronted Japanese managers over three related issues: "general issues of workers' rights; discrimination against Koreans by Japanese; and sexual discrimination against women workers" (ibid.:62).

There were over 50 labor disputes reported during the first ten years of MAFEZ (1970-1980). Most of these resulted in failure, and the workers involved in the disputes were fired. The number of disputes may not seem very high, but considering the government's restrictions, these were brave actions. Although the incidents were sporadic, resistance was always there. However, despite the courage and commitment of these women workers in Korea, they could not stand against "the combined power of the companies and the government" (Easter and Easter 1983:22). After 1980, even these disputes became impossible because the government began to enforce even harsher measures to prevent workers from organizing.

Despite laws prohibiting union activity in MAFEZ before 1987, several attempts were made to organize labor unions.

The first was at Buknung (a food processing company) early in 1980 during the period of political uncertainty after the assassination of President Park. Soon after the labor union was established, however, the company closed down and left Masan. Workers in two other factories tried to organize unions but were prevented from doing so by management. In 1986, workers of the Sumida electronics company organized a union that management destroyed, dismissing the union leader. Thus, until 1987 there was only a "joint labor-management council" operating as a top-down organization in the MAFEZ.

While women workers in Seoul and the nearby area were educated by religious organizations and radical students working in factories, those who worked in the Masan area were far from militant. Though some women workers in Masan were educated by the JOC and the Catholic Church in the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of workers were ignorant about what was going on in other parts of the nation.

In early 1987, whenever I tried to discuss strikes and demonstrations in Seoul, most workers were not interested. One woman even told me that she did not want to meet me anymore if I talked about political issues and did not want to know about such things, perhaps in fear of getting involved. Those same women workers, however, complained about their working conditions, abusive treatment by male supervisors, and low wages. Complaints are one thing but

taking action is a totally different matter.

Yet in August 1987, most workers did take action. What was the involvement of women workers in all the upheaval? What was the importance of labor unions to these workers? What did they know about labor unions? How did they feel about labor unions? Did everyone want to have unions? If not, who wanted labor unions and who did not? Drawing on extensive interviews and life histories, I distinguish three categories of workers: the first are the leaders of the movement; the second type are participants in the movement; and the third are non-participants.

B. Leaders

Women union leaders in Masan said that concern about poverty and inhuman working conditions were the reasons why they became involved in the labor movement. Most of them said that without help from the Catholic church organizations, they would not have realized that their problems could be solved by organizing. Without JOC's help, their concern would have remained individual worker's personal complaints.

In 1971, the Catholics established a church near the Zone to accommodate workers. They set up the Catholic Women's Center to offer night classes to workers who did not have elementary education. They also provided some recreational classes (e.g. mask-dance class, calligraphy

class, guitar class). It was not until 1987, that the Center for Workers' Rights was established in the Catholic Women's Center. The Center for Workers' Rights offered classes entitled, "Labor Standard Law," "Get to Know Our Rights," etc. These classes were aimed at workers who had become involved in labor unions.

The Masan chapter of JOC was founded in 1971. From its inception, it has tried to educate workers within the area. The Masan chapter is organized into five sections stationed at each of the five different neighborhood churches. Each section oversees several teams that belong to the section. Teams usually consist of four or five members. Members of JOC do not necessarily belong to the Catholic church, but many eventually convert. In 1987, there were about a hundred core members of the JOC working in the Masan area.

Most of the union leaders of 1987 were either members of the JOC, or they became members while they fought against the management. Several union leaders told me that they did not know anything about union or workers' rights until they started to go to meetings at JOC. There they learned to fight for their rights and that in order to do so they should be united.

In this section, I present three different sketches of women leaders. All of them are either current or past members of JOC. Through their personal voices I hope to show the characteristics of these leaders and to show why

and how they got involved in the labor organizing. I have used pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Mrs. Kim

Mrs. Kim was 31 years old in 1987. She had worked at F-one, a garment factory in the Zone for four years (1976-1980). I was introduced to her by friends at JOC. When I first visited her apartment, she was busy cleaning up the breakfast table, and washing clothes in the two hours that she had access to hot water that day. She was not apologetic about the condition of the apartment, and only mentioned that with two children, there was always work to be done. When I explained why I was there, she said that she had done this kind of interview once before in 1980 for the National JOC, and started to talk about her family background without hesitation.

I was born as the fifth daughter among 7 daughters. My family was working class and my mother had to work as a market vendor all through her life. My father was a semi-skilled worker, but his salary was never enough to support a large family. Although we were so poor, my mother never complained about being poor. I was always the last one to pay the tuition in my class, but I was never ashamed of that fact. I was influenced by my mother and I always thought that I could achieve anything if I tried hard enough. I knew that I could not go to high school because my younger sister entered junior high school about the time I graduated. I did not complain about not being able to go to high school although I felt sad. After I left junior high school, I went to work for the F-One, garment factory owned by a Japanese company in the Zone.

Mrs. Kim went to her first JOC meeting while she was working for F-One, where she was taught that workers should

organize in order to demand fair treatment at work. At F-One, there were many acts of sabotage. These incidents were related to low wage and long mandatory overtime work. She recalled working as many as 105 hours of overtime a month. Since no strikes were permitted, dissatisfied workers would sabotage the quota assigned to them by producing defects. They also staged wildcat strikes by turning off all the sewing machines. Although these were not organized strikes, they were acts of what James Scott calls "everyday resistance."¹ Workers had a sense of unity because many of them had been working at the same place for more than 5 to 6 years. But management was able to undercut this unity by bringing in skilled workers from Pusan who were paid on a higher scale.

When I asked her about sexual harassment by Japanese managers and technicians during the 1970s, she said:

I knew that many women workers dated Japanese managers at night, even though they did not say anything about it. Those women got easier tasks to do at work and were treated better. There were many demonstrations to condemn Japanese men for taking advantage of young women. Those demonstrations were organized by both Korean women and men. I hear a lot about sexual harassment by Korean men going on in the Zone now. It seems to me that sexual harassment got worse after Korean managers took over the positions of Japanese managers. It is not entirely men's fault since women workers should know better than just to follow these men. They had better get some sex education and learn the consequences of their activities.

One 18-year-old worker who was my team member got pregnant and we did not know it until she was 8 months along. We were so ignorant that she and I kept wondering why she got so fat. After we found out, we brought her to the doctor and she had to deliver a dead

baby. Our team members made contributions for her operation. I hope that no one is that ignorant now.

Mrs. Kim believed that workers' consciousness was higher in the 1970s than in 1987. She said that the reason why there were not many recent labor disputes was because workers thought that they earned enough to be comfortable. Once a president of JOC, she felt that JOC members should be more conscious about workers' rights and active in organizing workers. Most labor disputes during the 1970s, according to her, were initiated by JOC members in different factories. She was bitter about women workers' low consciousness and blamed current JOC's inactive recruiting procedure.

JOC is not the same as the labor movement. JOC is an organization for protecting workers' rights. Thus, the labor movement can be a part of JOC activities, but it is not the same. I do not believe that JOC should work only on the level of educating workers; I believe that education without participation is nothing.

She also lamented the women workers' high consumption rate these days, blaming mass media for creating fantasies for these workers. Workers who watched television dramas often forgot about their situation and spent their salaries as if they were middle class ladies; some women workers bought clothes on monthly installment pay schedule, and a dress could cost much more than their monthly salary. This tendency was, she claimed, more prevalent among electronics workers than garment workers, commenting

I heard that many electronics workers used their salaries either as their pocket money or as savings for

their dowries. However, a lot of garment factory workers are working very hard to support their families. For them, it is more than saving dowries, it is survival.

Mrs. Kim met her husband at JOC, and dated 3-4 years before they got married. Her husband graduated from correspondence college after 5 years and she finished her high school degree through correspondence school after she got married.

Her husband worked as a skilled engineer for a big conglomerate in Chang-won. He was active in raising workers' consciousness at his factory. She would like to have been active too, she said, but after she got married and had children, she was too busy with them to do anything else. She complained about the lack of child care system in Korea. Unless a woman has either her mother or mother-in-law to take care of her young children, she can not go to work. She would have gone to work right away if she could find someone to take care of her children.

Mrs. Kim wanted to work as a counsellor at the Catholic Women's Center, but she was not be able to because of her education. Although she got high school diploma, going for a college degree was out of question. She wished the Catholic Women's Center hired assistants at the level of junior or high school graduates rather than college graduates.

I do not understand why administrators at the Catholic Women's Center insist on college educated personnel. I would be better equipped to talk to factory workers

since I have worked in factories and I come from a working class family. Young women workers are intimidated by those middle class college educated counsellors. Moreover, those counsellors do not know anything about being a factory worker. I am not saying Catholic Women's Center is bad, it is good that we have that Center in Masan.

At the age of 31, Mrs. Kim has in effect retired from active participation in the labor movement. She is still militant, but her personal situation makes it unlikely that she will ever work in a factory again.

Eun-ja

Eun-ja was 21 years old in 1987. She was a fighter; her expression was intense and she was ready to argue at any time. I first met her at a small group discussion at the Catholic Women's Center in June 1987. She said that she believed that workers at her factory would follow her if she decided to start a strike. Not long before that she had organized a union at her garment manufacturing factory where more than half of the workers were married women. I met her many times before she sat down with me and talked about herself.

After I graduated from junior high school, I went to Pusan to live at my aunt's house for two years. I took courses from a correspondence high school while I was there and I learned how to operate a sewing machine. I worked for my aunt but she did not give me any wage based on our understanding that she would pay for my wedding expenses in the future. After two years, I moved to Taegu in order to earn wages because my aunt's business was not doing well. I only completed half of my high school course. The place where I worked in Taegu was a small factory in an apartment. There were about 100 workers aged from 12-13 years to 60 years old grandmothers. They did not care whom they hired. Every day I had to work until 10 o'clock at night. If

we worked the overnight shift on Saturday then we got Sunday off, if not, we had to work on Sunday too. There was not even one day off. We did not receive any overtime wage or any other kinds of allowances at all. On our monthly pay check, there was only one amount (about 100,000 won). I was too ignorant to know anything at that time. Furthermore, there was a quota to achieve and if I did not accomplish it I had to stay and finish it without getting paid. I worked there for 8 months until I could not bear it any longer and ran away. While I was working there, I always sent 50,000 won out of my 100,000 won wage, to my parents.

Eun-ja started to work in Masan at a garment factory in January 1984. She passed a sewing machine test, and was given credit for two years experience, and the daily wage was set at 2,800 won. In 1987, she earned 4,900 won a day, making 160,000 won/month. Out of this, she contributed 100,000 won to her mother to help her family. When I asked her how she became involved in the labor movement, she answered:

I am the oldest of four children (one boy and three girls). My family was so poor working as tenant farmers that my parents decided to move to Masan, where they thought they would be able to get jobs. My father works as a day laborer and my mother works as a cleaning woman at a hospital. Even though four members of my family (father, mother, myself and my younger sister) work hard, we are still poor. Not being able to get out of poverty made me think that something was wrong. Logically, if four of us are working, we should not be so poor, but we are. I did not know about how to fight for our rights until I started to go to JOC meetings. I learned that workers have the right to receive enough wages to support themselves, and that we should be united to organize a union to fight against the management. This is how I started to get involved in fighting against the management of the company where I am working.

At the garment factory, she met Jong-ja who was president of JOC. Eun-ja looked like a someone who could

fight for the cause, so Jong-ja recruited her. Being a member of JOC transformed Eun-ja from an angry, but ignorant worker to a well informed leader who is knowledgeable about labor law and other areas.

Her factory was notorious for its difficult work. It was one of the rare places where there was no overtime work. According to Eun-ja, the reason why they did not have overtime work was that management set a quota system that was so hard to meet that no one could survive additional work. Most of the married women workers were happy that they did not have to work overtime and worked very hard to finish the quota. Managers were happy that they achieved designated volume without having to pay overtime. Eun-ja talked about the labor process on their shop floor:

They put an extra worker at the start of the 20 worker-line. The number of parts increases and the rest of us have to finish whatever comes down to us. If we do not keep up with that, the manager yells at us. This way, the normal production quota of 200 pairs of pants per person goes up to 240, 280 and they even push us to produce up to 350 a day.

Eun-ja argued with her manager, who abused workers verbally and even physically sometimes (he threw scissors at workers on several occasions). Because she was the only one who spoke up, she was chosen as the representative of workers on the "joint labor-management council." The council, which consisted of two managers and one worker representative, was supposed to meet once a month, but she had to ask several times to hold the meeting. She tried to

bring up issues at the meetings, but the council was not like a union since management controlled it. She felt a strong need for a union in order to achieve better wage and working conditions.

She said that she was sorry for those married women who had to come back to work:

More than half of the sewing machine operators in our factory are married women and that is why it is so hard to organize. These older women are afraid of losing their jobs, because without their wage, their families cannot survive. Almost every married woman lives in a housing unit for which she has to pay either a monthly rent or a long-term deposit rent; only a very few own their own house. They told me that they never expected to work in a factory again after they were married. However, once they got married, they clearly felt the economic need to work, and having had previous experience with sewing machines, they came back to work.

Eun-ja became president of her factory union which was organized in 1987. She had a hard time organizing a union since married women were afraid of losing their jobs during strikes. However, they continued a long fight under threat from the management to close down and got a higher wage increase than management first set out to give.

Eun-ja's mother died in September. As the oldest daughter, she was expected to take responsibility for running the household. She was torn between her job and her family. Her father was very much against her union activity from the start, and he told her to quit her position at the union and take care of her siblings. She was very unhappy about not being able to take care of her siblings, but she

was not willing to quit her union position.

When asked about her long term plans, she said:

Too many women workers get married for economic reasons (to be supported by their husbands). I wish they could change their way of thinking and become independent human beings. It seems to me that we learn from our family and our patriarchal social structure that we should be subordinate to men. If women get united, we can destroy that kind of ideology, but women give up and subordinate themselves to men. For women workers, marriage seems an easy way out from our low class, miserable life, but when we see so many married women come back to work, we should realize that marriage is not the answer either. That is why we should unite to fight for better working conditions and better wages and to protect our rights as workers.

In 1989, she was still very active in the union, and I recently learned that she was arrested and imprisoned at the end of 1989 during a strike against her factory.

Mi-ja

One of the strongest unions in the Zone is at the "Jungchon" electronics factory which is owned by a Japanese firm. Their 26-year-old union leader has worked in the Zone for nine years including five years at Jungchon. Before she became a union president, she was the representative of workers in the "joint labor-management council," and fought for better working conditions since 1986. One of the reasons why this union was so strong was that the leader has worked there for a long time and workers trusted her and followed her direction. Also, she had close friends who were devoted to union activity, which helped a lot. When I asked her how she came to work in the Zone, she replied:

I have worked in the Zone for 9 years now (1980-1987).

I started at a shoe factory. I went to work for that company because they promised to send me to night school, but after 11 months, they told me that they decided not to send anyone that year. So I moved to another shoe factory. Since I had only a junior high school education, I could not apply to the electronics factory. Even at the second factory, I could not go to the industrial night school, so finally I paid for my own tuition to go to school. At the second factory, I worked for two and a half years and then moved to Jungchon electronics about 5 years ago. My plan was to learn as much as possible. I thought that education would solve my problems. I went to private institutes to learn this and that (e.g. English conversation, Flower design, and Telex) in the early morning before I went to work, and at night, I went to high school. I went around and around like this, as if learning would solve all my problems. I tried four times to start a college correspondence course, but now I have given up since I realized that a college diploma did not mean much. A lot of union officers were taking correspondence courses, but they all decided not to continue either.

When she was working at the second shoe factory, she had to argue with the line leader every day in order to be allowed to go to school. She recalled how she decided to do something about the way workers were treated at the factory:

At Shinheung, about a third of the workers were students. The work at a shoe factory is hard, so the management used promises of education to lure young women to work in the factory. But they would not let students go to school whenever they needed overtime work. Students had to cry, fight, and run away to go to school. Seeing those incidents, I got angrier and angrier. From those experiences, I learned that we needed a union to protect our rights.

She was the workers' representative at the Jungchon "joint labor management council" before becoming the union president. But she still felt that management did not treat her with respect:

I wished that I could have a sex change operation so that I could become a man whom the management could

respect. Their attitude toward me was "What do you women know about anything?" So that instead of treating me as a representative of workers, they treated me as an irrational woman. I wonder when this attitude of looking down on women will change, or if it will ever change.

During the July-August labor uprising, their union achieved a wage increase of over 20 percent. In 1988, 460 out of 670 workers became union members. She considered that 150 members were core members who would be willing to fight for the survival of their union. During the wage negotiations in 1988, the management threatened workers, claiming that the orders from the parent company were decreasing. They had, in fact, been transferring the orders to the outside subcontracting firms since the end of 1987. Mi-ja explained to the union members what management was doing and asked for their cooperation. Their union organized a task force to investigate the subcontracting firms their company was using outside the Zone. They gathered information on the volume of order, working conditions, workers' treatment, and the process of taking care of defects to use during the negotiations.

Her opinion was that workers' problems should be solved by workers themselves rather than by student activists from outside.

If we continue to depend on outside people we cannot achieve anything for ourselves. Even though we may make mistakes, because we do not know exactly what to do, we will learn eventually. When we try to solve our problems by ourselves, intellectuals should step aside.

In 1990, their union has been crushed by management. Most of the core members have been fired, some have been arrested. And Mi-ja is in hiding and is being sought by the police.

C. Participants

In this section, I will describe those women workers who became active participants in labor unions, either through JOC or some other channel. I believe that some of these participants will eventually become leaders. A few have already made up their minds to devote themselves in the labor movement. They were all actively involved in strikes during the July-August uprising.

Ae-suk

Ae-suk was 19 years old with glasses and short straight hair. One could see that she was a very serious and intense person. She spoke clearly, logically and with a force that could move people. When I met her, she was planning to go back to Cheju-do, her native province. There was an obvious conflict going on within her: on the one hand, she wanted to work for the cause of the union in her factory; on the other hand, she wanted to go back to her family and it now seemed that they could afford to send her to college.

She agreed that there were a lot of things that needed to be done in the Zone. JOC organizers tried to convince her to stay in Masan in order to help the labor movement.

She felt deeply committed to the cause of labor unions in the Zone, and the JOC organizer told her, "once you go back to your family, you may never come back."

Ae-suk grew up in a middle class family in Cheju-do. Her father was a small scale tangerine wholesaler. She was the oldest daughter among four children. She left her home in her second year at high school. Her parents argued all the time because of her father's drinking problem and she hated them. She wanted to get away from her parents and it was also a bad time for her family financially. Since she was Catholic, she got a job with the church. But she wanted to get away from Cheju-do, so she and a friend came to Masan looking for jobs and an opportunity to go to school. The only person they knew was one woman from their home town who was working in the Zone.

Since she was under 18 and had not finished her high school, Ae-suk could not apply for a job at an electronics factory. She took a job at a textile factory and moved into the Zone dormitory. The work was very hard and it was difficult to adjust to changing shifts every other week: one week she had to work a day shift (7:30 a.m. - 7:00p.m.) and the next week she had to work a night shift (7:00p.m. - 7:30a.m.). Since it was her first experience, she did not know anything about other factories. She did not know that she was eligible for a night shift allowance, so she did not receive one.

Unlike most companies in the Zone, they did not provide any meals during the night shift. Many workers brought ramyon (noodles) and cooked it on a hot plate during their one hour break. Many workers also used this time for sleeping. Most workers only had a primary school or junior high school education. Ae-suk was surprised to see so many people with only a primary school education. In Cheju-do, only a few people did not complete high school. She was also surprised to see so many poor people in Masan. She decided to quit working at a textile factory because she could not find any time to study, and the main reason she had come to Masan was to go to school.

The second factory Ae-suk applied to was an electronics company. She was then 18 years old and they accepted workers with only junior high school education. At the electronics factory, about one third of the workers were students who did not have to work overtime. She tried to study for high school equivalency examination, but she was unable to continue because of health problems. Then she began a high school correspondence course and had almost finished it in 1988. She quit the job because she just did not want to work. She could afford to do this because she was receiving some help from her family. A few months later she took her third job at another electronics factory, where she was working when I interviewed her. She worked as an inspector using a microscope. After a year she found out

that her eye sight got very bad and she had to have glasses made. When she applied for the job, she lied about her education and told the supervisor that she was willing to work overtime and planned to stay for at least three years.

When I asked Ae-suk about what was happening at her factory, she said:

After the uprising, we received about a 20 percent increase in wage and 25 percent increase in bonuses. After the increase, some male workers got together and organized a union without involving women workers. Out of 2,000 workers, about 1,700 were women, but they did not consult us and the union only chose men as officers. Our first task was to change the union from a management-run one to a democratic workers' union. We struck for three days without any result.

I asked her how and why she became interested in the labor union and labor movement. In answering my question she told me about a student who was working at her factory as a "disguised worker" trying to organize workers.

It was easy to talk to her because she was always smiling and was warm to everyone. I was very shy but she tried to make conversation with me. I always carried a newspaper to read and she noticed that. She was a very understanding and open person and never pressured us to learn about the labor movement. Only after we became quite close did she start to talk about how the Korean government was a military dictatorship and how students and workers should get together to destroy the dictatorship. However, we did not know that she was a college student. After No Tae-woo was elected as president, she suggested writing "Destroy the rigged election" on the wall of bathroom. Three of us did. Right after that she was arrested and now she is at Masan prison. After she was arrested, the manager summoned me to his office and asked how well we knew each other and to bring him any books she gave me. I told him that I did not know anything about it but I was quite scared. There was a rumor that they were going to test our handwriting to compare it to the ones in the bathroom. I learned a lot after that and the fact that she did not say anything about us made me

think more. I cannot even go to visit her because only her immediate family is allowed to visit. I will never forget her and I am truly glad that I met her.

By the time I left in March 1988, Ae-suk had decided to stay in Masan. Perhaps her friend in prison influenced her. She now lives with two other women workers and they all work hard to achieve something at their respective factories.

Yong-ja

Yong-ja was from Cholla-nam province and she had a strong regional accent. She was tall and big, and had long straight hair. She was always smiling and had warm personality. She was the second daughter among four children. Her mother ran a small candy store in Sunchon and her father worked as a day laborer. Her older sister was a good student and was sent to a high school, but Yong-ja did not do well in school so her parents persuaded her not to continue on to high school. She thought that she would be able to earn her living and continue her education if she came to Masan. Her junior high school had a sister relationship with several factories in Masan and Pusan, and students who did not plan to go on to high school could learn sewing in their last year. Thus, she came to work at a shoe factory in the Zone.

She only sent money to her family when she got a bonus. She said that her little help (say \$10-\$20/month) would not make much difference to her family. She and her parents agreed that she should save for her dowry and take care of

herself. When I asked her about the labor process at her shoe factory, she answered:

Even if the work was hard, I did not have anywhere else to compare it with. Since they sent us to high school, we thought that we had obey the managers if we wanted to finish school. Sometimes we had to go back to work after school finished at 10:30pm and work all night. Of course I did not know anything about the workers' rights then.

After a year and half, Yong-ja's sister invited her to live with her in Seoul. She quit working to go to Seoul, but she did not like Seoul at all and came back after a week. When she returned she was allowed to continue at school, even though she could not get her job back. Usually, if a woman quit her job, she was automatically dismissed from school since the factory was the one who sponsored her. 1985 was a very slow year and no factory was hiring in the Zone, so she had to go to work at a subcontracting electronics company. The wage was very low compared to the jobs in the Zone.

She heard that a new shoe factory had opened in the Zone and got a position there. It was summer vacation and she told them that she was not a student. When she had to go back to school, the manager scolded her, and told her that she had to choose either school or work. She chose to go to school. When she was about to leave, another manager came over and offered her a second chance, since students had a reputation for working harder than other workers.

When she became a senior, she wanted to change her job

to an electronics factory where they observed all the holidays. So she moved again to an electronics factory. The managers treated workers better there and students received dinner before they went off to school. Nevertheless, Yong-ja did not like conveyor line work at the electronics factory.

At the shoe factory, we could go to bathroom whenever we wanted to and nobody said anything to us. In the electronics factory, I could not even go to the bathroom and could not move around at all. Furthermore, I could not get along with my co-workers which made things a lot harder. I could not stand working at the electronics factory. Even if the work was hard at the shoe factory, I liked it there better.

So she came back to her old factory. She met her room mates there. Through them, she became involved with JOC. Yong-ja was an enthusiastic JOC member. After her shoe factory went bankrupt, she went to work at a garment factory where Eun-ja was a union leader. Later she became a vice president of their union in 1988 and active.

For Yong-ja, her room mate Myong-hye was a role model. She talked about meeting her:

At the shoe factory, I met Myong-hye who later became my room mate. When I first met her, she was trying to organize our line and telling everyone not to sign an agreement to return to work right after the Chusok holiday. Workers often do not come back right after the holiday, so management was worried. Myong-hye told us that they did not have any right to force us to sign anything. I was amazed at how she could persuade the other workers. She was so small and so fragile, but she had lots and lots of energy. After we started to live together, she taught me about labor unions and workers' rights. Sometimes, it was boring but going to JOC and meeting other workers was fun. I want to be like Myong-hye someday and I have to study hard in order to follow her ways.

Yong-ja was fired because of her union activities at the end of 1989. She still goes to her factory every day demanding reinstatement. Her former room mate Myong-hye helps her financially.

D. Non-participants

In this section, I will present those workers whom I label as non-participants. These workers comprise at least three quarters of the workers in the Zone. They do not want to get involved in radical politics, but they appreciate the wage increases that unions bring them.

Many women were only interested in meeting men, dating, and getting married. They did not have any time to become involved with their factory unions. They were happy that they could go home early during the labor uprising and that they received a wage increase. Some of them felt that their unions were doing something for them and that they should become members.

Yon-hwa

Yon-hwa was the closest friend I had while I worked at the electronics factory. She was tall, about 5'7" with long black hair, and very shy. She was a typical Masan factory worker. She was from a lower-middle class family. When I asked her about her family background, she answered, "My family is middle class," without hesitation. She helped her family financially, although she did not feel that she was

supporting her family. She was the only wage earner in her household. Her father was over 70 years old and sick. Her mother sometimes worked as a vegetable vendor at a market during summer time, and her younger brother was a senior at high school. Her older brother and older sister had moved away. They were struggling to support their own families.

Yon-hwa was the fourth child in a family of five children. One brother was killed in a car accident while he was in the army and her family got compensation money for his death. That was the first large sum of money that her family had ever had. Her parents put the money aside for her younger brother's college education. Her oldest brother and sister had to go work to assist the family after finishing primary school. Yon-hwa thought that she was lucky to be able to go to high school. Her younger brother was the only one who would go on to college. Only she and her younger brother did not have to work while they were going to school. One time she said, "In a wealthy family, the older children are better off, however, in a poor family, the younger ones are better off."

When I asked Yon-hwa why her family moved to Masan, she said:

We moved to Masan from Haman when I was in fourth grade. I heard that my grandparents were once well off, but my uncle lost most of it gambling and we only had little land. My parents thought that the city would be better than the farm for educating children. But there was no work available for my father who was already in

his sixties and not well. My mother, sister, and brother had to go to work. My sister worked as a factory worker for over ten years. She got married about a year and half ago, and now she has to go back to work again even after she had a baby. I would never go back to factory work. It really is a degrading experience.

Before Yon-hwa came to work at the electronics factory, she was a clerk for a trading company. She worked there for over two years, but she did not like the gossip and intrigue of office politics there. She felt disappointed by the job and quit thinking that it would be easy to get another job. When she could not get a job for a month, she started to get worried. She had heard about the Zone but never thought of working there because of the low status of factory work. When she could not find a job after a month, she and her friend applied for a job at one of the biggest electronics companies.

When I first started to work here, I felt really ashamed of being a factory worker. I was afraid that I would run into my high school friends outside the Zone. During the first week, I did not even go to eat at the cafeteria. I did not realize that most workers were high school graduates. Now, after two years here, I do not feel ashamed.

While Yon-hwa was working outside the Zone, she gave all her salary to her mother and got some pocket money from her. But after she started to work in the Zone, she only gave her mother two thirds of her wages and kept one third to use for her own expenses. She did not give her bonuses to her mother, but she used most of the money to buy things that she and her family needed. Her sister complained that

she had changed since she started to work in the Zone, but Yon-hwa thought that it was only fair to keep part of her wages. After all, she was 21 years old and she needed new clothes sometimes.

She did not know anything about labor unions and was afraid of talking about them. Whenever I brought up any kind of political issue, she asked for me not to talk about it. "I would rather talk about other things than politics since I do not know anything about it." She never complained about overtime work, and was never absent. She was a model worker who received compliments from managers. Some time after I left the factory, she was promoted to a position that involved half secretarial work and half production work. She was very excited at first, but later she complained that the job was very stressful. "Other girls talk about me and they do not treat me as one of them any more."

Yon-hwa did not join the demonstrations in July 1987, and was skeptical about the labor movement. She commented:

During the mass uprising, our section was very quiet. Although the woman who led the demonstration was working on the same floor, we did not know who she was. I still am not that positive about this uprising. I feel that a workers' organization should be formed eventually, but I do not want to start it. I only joined the union because everyone said that we should join.

Yon-hwa thought that it was a good idea when the woman who was head of the union was replaced by a man. She thought

that a man would work better as a leader. After the man took over, according to her, a lot of changes took place that benefitted workers:

After the uprising, the lunch allowance was raised by 100 won. It seemed that the menu got a lot better right after the strike, but this did not last. However, compared to before, working conditions are better: we can go to bathroom freely now and get telephones messages without too much hassle.

Yet she was worried about some of the problems that happened in the factory after the uprising:

At the end of 1987, the management stopped hiring workers, and they increased the volume of the orders they gave out to subcontracting firms outside the Zone. According to the supervisor, even if 10 percent of the products they get are defective, the company saves about a third of the production cost by having them made by subcontracting firms. These days, there is not any overtime work for workers on the preparation line and a lot of workers are worried that they did not make enough.

The last time I spoke with Yon-hwa in February 1988, she told me she planned to get married in September. She was introduced to her future husband by her brother-in-law who worked at the same factory. Her future husband was an engineer who had graduated from a technical high school. She reflected on her experience with factory work:

I would never have worked in a factory if my parents had been in a better financial situation. I would like to lead a pure life not polluted by social evils. But if you work in society you experience more evil things than good things. I will never work in a factory once I get married. I would rather manage a small store, maybe a bakery, a flower shop, or a snack shop. If I own my own shop, if I work harder I will earn more and I do not have to put up with as much as in a factory.

Mi-ae

Mi-ae was eighteen years old and worked at a garment factory. She had a long history of working as a housemaid since she was 8 years old. When she was very small, her family lived comfortably in a rural area. When her father brought another woman to her house, her mother then left home, abandoning her three children. Her father married the other woman. The three children were mistreated by their step-mother and her older sister, and the family disintegrated. Her older sister ran away and Mi-ae was given to a distant relative in Pusan to work as a maid.

Mi-ae worked as a maid for several distant relatives in Pusan and Seoul until she was 15 years old. Her only education was two years of primary school in Pusan. Her wages were sent to her step-mother who told her that she was saving it for her dowry. When Mi-ae was 15 years old, her step-mother told her that her sister was living in Masan. She wrote to her sister who invited her to come to live with her. She moved to Masan and found a job at a subcontracting firm outside the Zone where they produce gloves. She could not get a job in the Zone because of her lack of education and her age. At the factory, everyone was impressed at how quickly and well she learned to use the sewing machine.

Because she did not have any formal education, she could not even add or subtract well. She did not know that she was being cheated on her hours of work. When she found

out about it she quit her job, and moved to another subcontracting factory. After moving around among several of these subcontracting factories, she finally got a job in the Zone where she met her current room mates. Her room mates persuaded her to go to a meeting at JOC and to attend night class for primary education. She passed an examination for her primary school diploma, and for a while she continued to attend junior high school night classes, but eventually she quit.

I do not do well in a class. Maybe it is because I am too old for this. I do not want to study any more. I would like to go out at night sometimes, but I cannot do that if I go to night classes. I know I am dumb. Even if I study I don't do well, so I don't want to go to school. I would like to date at night but my room mates are very strict about me going to school. They get mad if I don't go to school. I don't know much about labor, unions, or demonstrations and I don't want to be involved in that either. However, the only people I know are the JOC members. I enjoy going to the JOC center and talking to male friends. They like me to cook and clean for them, but whenever they started to discuss demonstrations I get bored. Of course I do participate in demonstrations and I like shouting, singing, and running away from combat police, but I really do not know why we have to do this. I would rather go to a movie with someone I like, or go to a cafe and have a nice dinner.

Although Mi-ae had worked for 3 years before I met her, she did not have any substantial savings. She spent everything on clothing, furniture, other dating expenses. Because she never really had any money to spend before, she was almost compulsive on payday. Now she knows that she can make money working, she was not worried about not having any savings.

Mi-ae hated her room mates' supervision of her and kept

complaining about their intervention in her life. She wanted to move out and eventually did in 1989. For Mi-ae, JOC was only a place where she could meet male friends safely. She did whatever she had to do to be a member, but she was not interested in being a leader. She was happy being a non-participating follower.

D. Conclusion

As I mentioned in chapter 6, there were about 100 core members of JOC who worked very hard to organize women workers in 1987. The uprising in Masan was possible mainly because of these JOC members' organizing effort. However, the majority of women workers in the Zone were not active participants in the uprising. These workers were not interested in the uprising at all, and did not participate in the strikes, or were only slightly interested in the movement, and participated in strikes and unions only because other people were doing it. The uprising was led by a small number of leaders who believed in the movement. There were also sizable number of active participants who joined the movement.

In the first fifteen years of MAFEZ existence, the cases of worker resistance (organized or unorganized) show that many workers were unhappy. In most cases, the resistance took the form of individual sabotage or of unorganized wild cat strikes. These incidents were

triggered by specific complaints. JOC members were involved in many of these incidents.

Compared to the number of strikes led by women workers in the Seoul area, the number of strikes in the Masan area was very small. I suggest four main reasons why there were not that many strikes in this area. First, laws in the Masan area were stricter and more rigidly enforced than in the rest of the country. Because Masan was a Free Export Zone, the government sought to protect foreign investors. Second, Masan was far away from the political centers of radical activity in Seoul. Whereas in the Seoul area many college students became involved in the labor movement and sought to organize workers, few students came to Masan. JOC was the only organization devoted to organizing workers in Masan. Third, MAFEZ employed a labor force with certain characteristics that made them difficult to organize. The workers were young women in their teens and early twenties, so they were relatively naive. Furthermore, their expected involvement in the manufacturing labor force was relatively brief and there was little incentive for them to risk short term income loss if they were not going to be in the labor force when whatever benefits were received. Fourth, the workers in MAFEZ were paid relatively well compared to the opportunities available to them outside the Zone.

It is difficult to generalize about who become leaders and why. Most seemed to come from poor families, and to

have struggled to gain their education. Leaders were motivated by an acute sense of injustice based on their experiences in the work place. And JOC was crucial for teaching leaders about labor unions and workers' rights and providing them with a forum to develop their ideas.

Participants were strongly influenced by the leaders, but they had less experience or less leadership skills. They were ordinary workers who would not have become involved in this without their relationship with the leaders, but they were essential to the success of the strikes in 1987. They had positive attitudes toward unions and JOC. Some of these young women are likely to become future leaders of the labor movement in MAFEZ.

Many of the women I classify as non-participants took part in strikes in 1987. They participated in strikes not because they were convinced about the cause, but because everyone was doing it. Nevertheless, they also were not happy at the low wages they received and at the abusive treatment from managers. They did not, however, actively participate in organizing unions in their factory. They professed interest in unions, but they did not show up at meetings. Many did not know or care whether their unions were democratic or management-run. Nonetheless, they were happy to have their wages and bonuses raised and to receive better working conditions.

The 1987 labor uprising drastically changed thoughts

and destinies of many women. Some changed their whole life directions because of the events of that year; some have learned that they would like to follow the leaders' path. Many will have left the Zone. Some may have forgotten the uprising. And some may feel that the activities of labor organizers are responsible for driving multinational corporations out of the Zone.

Notes

1. Workers' everyday resistance was well documented by other researchers. James Scott's Weapons of the Weak (1985), describes everyday resistance of peasant farmers in Malaysia; Aihwa Ong's Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia (1987) deals with women factory workers' resistance.

CHAPTER VIII. CONCLUSION: WOMEN WORKERS AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

This study has two main themes: the impact of factory employment on women workers; and women workers' involvement in the labor movement in Korea. Despite the fact that Masan Free Export Zone has existed since 1970, few studies have focused on its impact on its workers. This thesis is a case study of the labor force formed by Korean women working for multinational corporations, and contributes to a better understanding of the position of third world women within the "new international division of labor."

In this concluding chapter I examine the changes that have occurred since the 1987 labor uprising, and the question as to whether women workers have begun to form part of a self conscious working class. Many different actors have been involved in shaping the Korean working class. Workers, labor leaders, and government have all played distinct roles. The period while I was engaged in fieldwork (1986-1988) was crucial to the formation of a sense of working class identity among Korean workers.

The notion of a "working class" was very important to militant labor organizers, many of whom were college students and not from working-class background. Labor organizers included college students, intellectuals, and revolutionary intelligentsia, all middle-class people. Thus, labor leadership differed significantly in background

and beliefs to most of the workers. Nationalism (especially ideas about North Korea), religion, and Marxism all contributed to the ideology of labor leaders. Their nationalist sentiments were goaded by such factors as the existence of an unpopular government supported by the United States of America, the presence of a large number of American troops, and the presence of foreign-owned companies in Masan. Korean nationalism, however, was not limited to radicals. It transcended both class and political boundaries, and was a key component of both government and anti-government propaganda.

Korean traditional society was strongly hierarchical. It was headed by an emperor and had a well-defined class of aristocrats. But events in the 20th century all but eliminated the social relevance of those traditional categories. Because of the homogeneity of Korean society and the fact that present day class divisions do not correspond with those from Korea's feudal past, workers did not feel that they formed a separate social strata. Most workers in Masan considered themselves to be middle-class and did not seriously oppose the government. They did not want to make major changes in the way society works. If they were unhappy about their situation, it was merely with their fate as individuals not as part of a class.

Korea has achieved a remarkable rate of economic growth during the past thirty years but has remained heavily

dependent on foreign capital, technology and trade. There were significant political costs to Korea's industrialization program as authoritarian regimes maintained their grip on power throughout this period. These regimes justified the exclusion of Korean workers from the benefits of development by claiming that this would interfere with rapid economic growth. Thus the workers have not been adequately compensated for their role in development. Korean workers are a well educated and efficient labor force, but they remain severely underpaid and have perhaps the longest working hours anywhere in the world.

The women workers in Masan exemplify this condition of low pay and long working hours, with the additional burden of a tradition emphasizing female passivity. They have been a capitalist's ideal labor force, highly productive and characterized by low militancy and willingness to work for low wages. Nevertheless, their recent political activism indicates their increasing frustration with the "Korean economic miracle."

The extent of MAFEZ women workers' involvement in the labor movement is illuminating because it contradicts the notion that women workers are docile and subservient, a major reason why multinational corporations hire women workers. Women workers in Masan have not been passive, but have taken significant steps to control their destinies.

They played important roles in organizing their own trade unions, and their ideas have contributed to the shaping of a working class consciousness in Korea.

Women workers in MAFEZ are not only part of the Korean labor movement, but as part of the new international division of labor, their struggle has global implications. In women's subordination as a gender, they often project a docile, subservient attitude toward men, especially those men who occupy positions of authority over them. These include fathers and husbands at home, and supervisors and managers at work. Because female workers are often successfully manipulated by management, studies rarely reveal "class consciousness and resistance" but rather provide "descriptions of adaptation and accommodation to inevitable social and economic change" (Freeman 1989:5). In their institutionalized subordination, women resemble colonized people who must present a similarly passive facade to their colonizers. Frantz Fanon has discussed how the public passivity and fatalism which colonized peoples display towards their colonizers conceals an inner, private rebellion. The external passivity is not a natural state, but is produced through enormous efforts of self-repression, and when colonized peoples finally take action against their oppressors their actions are intense and spontaneous. "Action, not negotiation, is the characteristic response" (Fanon 1969:48 cited in Elson and Pearson 1984:26-27).

Women working in the global assembly line have resorted to a variety of strategies to protest the conditions under which they work. Examples of these include: Malaysian workers' resistance through mass hysteria (Ong 1987, 1988); Jamaican garment and textile workers' public demonstrations (Bolles 1983); Philippina textile workers' resistance to the Marcos regime (Enloe 1983); Caribbean countries' organized strikes (CAFRA Newsletter 1988). Korean textile workers are also well known for their militant resistance activities (Enloe 1983; Former Dong-il Textile Co. Labor Union 1985; Former Won-poong Textile Co. Labor Union 1988; Karl and Choi 1983).

Workers inevitably resist the low wages and poor working conditions that are the result of the new international division of labor, but this resistance does not always take an organized form. James Scott argues in Weapons of the Weak that forms of everyday resistance need not be collective nor disinterested in order to have revolutionary potential (1985:342). Self interested actions taken against oppressive conditions have the potential to generate political momentum to change those conditions. Disorganized individual actions can quickly become part of an organized movement when the right conditions occur, as in the rapid development of labor organizations by women workers in MAFEZ.

Multinational companies operating in Masan have created

a new labor force of young single females. The young women who work in the Zone have few other options available to them (see Salaff 1981; Sheridan and Salaff 1984), therefore, companies are able to hire them for extremely low wages. They are able to select characteristics suited for the repetitious and exhausting tasks required for export processing. Youth and inexperience, as well as Korean gender expectations serve to make this labor force easy to control. Management relies on young women's expectations to enforce work discipline and limit organized opposition.

Female workers are constrained by both patriarchy and capitalism, but how individual women are affected depends on their class position. New forms of economic exploitation are introduced by factory jobs. Although these have been structured around traditional idioms of gender subordination, these new forms are based on capitalist relations rather than family ones. Working in the Zone allows unmarried women workers a short respite from domination by the family, but the low wages that they receive only allow them a brief taste of consumerism. The time spent working in the Zone also delays marriage for most women workers, but they must use much of their earnings to reinvest in the family system by saving for a dowry. A large dowry gives a woman a better chance to get married to a man from a good class background.

Most women workers try to use marriage as a strategy to

improve their status. How successful they were likely to be at this depended upon their class background. Women who had better class backgrounds received more education, and usually worked in electronics factories rather than garment factories. Some electronics workers did make good marriages to white collar workers. They were able to stay at home as housewives or to get jobs other than factory work. Most garment workers married either factory workers or other blue collar workers. They only stayed home because they did not have any other way to care for their children. Their families often had severe financial needs, but mothers of young children could not go back to work unless they could use their extended families for child care. Women made their choices from the options available to them.

Women married to middle class men had some measure of economic security, but at the cost of restrictions on their freedom made by the traditional patriarchal family. Confucian ideals have always been beyond the means of poor families, and the income from women employed in factories has enabled some of these families to meet these standards better. Because of Confucian gender ideology, however, the contribution of women is not acknowledged by their families. Working class husbands cannot guarantee economic security for their wives, but in order to maintain their position as patriarchs they have to deny that they need their wives' income. In these cases women are exploited both as workers

and as wives. Their employment outside the home intensifies the existing forms of gender subordination at home (cf. Rubin 1976; Sen 1980).

The myth that social mobility is possible continues to exist among young women workers since a few workers do marry well. My data show that a woman's class background affects the trajectory of her involvement in the labor force. Women who have worked in garment factories are more likely to return to working in factories after their marriages. These women are skilled sewing machine workers, but most of them have had only primary school or junior high school education. On the other hand, former workers in electronics factories come back to work in smaller numbers. Compared to garment workers, electronics workers usually have had more education, most are high school graduates. Because of her education, a worker in an electronics factory is in a better position to marry a man from a better class background. Young women workers still strongly believe that they will leave factory work behind when they get married. Nevertheless, most women find that marriage is unable to improve their class position. It is these workers whose experience of being trapped at the bottom of the class system reveals the dark side of the "Korean Economic Miracle."

MAFEZ has become less attractive to foreign investors because of the increased union activities of women workers

and the higher wages they have to be paid. The conflicting aims of multinational corporations and Korean workers is illustrated by the departure of the T.C. Electronics Company and Sumida Electronics Company from the Zone. Tandy's departure was triggered by concern about the "general level of cultural change and political uncertainty" (The New York Times August 26, 1988), in other words they did not want to deal with a unionized labor force. Tandy's willingness to pull out of Korea in spite of the profits made in the past shows the seriousness of the situation. Other companies have also warned workers that orders are decreasing, and that they may leave.

What is happening now in Korea shows the conflict between the host government's expressed intention in setting up an export processing zone and the multinational corporation's interest in exploiting it. When the MAFEZ reached some of the economic development goals that the government set out to achieve; when economic development finally meant something for workers in Korea, multinational corporations responded with threats and closures.

The unions at T.C. Electronics and Sumida Electronics made important gains through their militancy, but ultimately their multinational parent companies were able to defeat them by closing their factories in the Zone. Even if workers in Masan are able to organize and temporarily achieve higher wages and better working conditions, are they

better off if their employers leave Korea to find cheaper, unorganized labor?

The Tandy case involved more than just a conflict between workers and management, however, because of its international dimension. Multinational companies set up assembly factories in third world countries solely because they can reduce their labor costs. If wages improve in these countries, they move to cheaper, poorer ones. It is difficult to see how these factories can make significant contributions to development. If they cannot contribute then keeping export processing zones open may not be in the workers' long term interests. The closing of the T.C. Electronics factory, may be a labor victory after all, since it radicalized workers, and thus contributed to the development of a working class leadership.

In the first fifteen years that MAFEZ operated, many incidents of worker resistance show that workers were unhappy. In most cases, the resistance took the form of individual sabotage (c.f. Scott 1985) or of unorganized wild cat strikes. These incidents were triggered by specific complaints, and did not result in the formation of any organized labor movement. They were important, nonetheless, because they revealed women's dissatisfaction with conditions in the factories, and because the women involved in these disputes gained the support of labor organizers from JOC.

The members of JOC worked very hard to organize women workers in 1987. The participation of workers from Masan in the uprising was possible mainly because of these JOC members' organizing effort. The uprising was led by a small number of women who believed in the movement. Although most of the women participated in strikes during this period, they were not active participants in the uprising. Many workers were interested in higher wages, but not in the other issues involved with the uprising, or they participated in strikes and unions only because other people were doing it. Nevertheless, the events of 1987 also helped in recruiting sizable numbers of workers who joined the movement as active participants.

The 1987 labor uprising drastically changed the thoughts and destinies of many women. Some changed their whole life directions because of the events of that year; some have learned that they would like to follow the leaders' path. Many will have left the Zone. Some may have forgotten the uprising. And some may feel that the activities of labor organizers are responsible for driving multinational corporations out of the Zone, and that they are therefore responsible their loss of employment.

The number of strikes in the Masan area was small, compared to the number of strikes led by women workers in the Seoul area. There were four main reasons why Masan was less militant than Seoul. First, laws in the Masan area

were stricter and more rigidly enforced than in the rest of the country. Because Masan was a Free Export Zone, the government sought to protect foreign investors. Second, Masan was far away from the political centers of radical activity in Seoul. Whereas in the Seoul area many college students became involved in the labor movement and sought to organize workers, few students came to Masan. JOC was the only organization devoted to organizing workers in Masan. Third, MAFEZ employed a labor force with certain characteristics that made them difficult to organize. The workers were young women in their teens and early twenties, so they were relatively naive. Furthermore, their expected involvement in the manufacturing labor force was relatively brief and there was little incentive for them to risk short term income loss if they were not going to be in the labor force when whatever benefits were received. Fourth, the workers in MAFEZ were paid relatively well compared to the opportunities available to them outside the Zone.

Women workers in export processing zones around the world have not kept to the passive and subordinate roles designed for them by management; they fought whatever way they could. The forms of their resistance have ranged from "mass hysteria," in Malaysia to "organized strikes" in the Philippines, Korea and Caribbean countries. In Korea, the struggle of women factory workers is occurring in and is shaped by the international political economy, as well as

forming part of a national political movement against the authoritarian government.

In Korea, we saw how women workers have organized themselves to struggle against harsh working conditions. The 1987 labor uprising taught both the Korean government and companies operating in Korea that traditional attitudes toward women workers could not be maintained. Business firms operating in the export processing zones can no longer assume that they will have unlimited access to a docile work force, willing to work long hours for low wages. Women workers in MAFEZ are more than willing to continue the struggle until their rights as workers are respected.

Many researchers have talked about the need for an internationally organized labor union. Nothing has come of this much debated topic, however, the only way to restrict multinational corporations from continually moving their operations to cheaper and more oppressed labor markets is for workers in both developed and developing countries to organize internationally. "In order for those alliances to be effective, workers must extend their organizations to overseas branches to overcome the competitive downgrading of the wage scale worldwide" (Nash n.d.:25). Unions from the developed and the developing countries must get together, if they want to check the power of multinational corporations. Multinational unions are needed to deal with multinational corporations.

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNMARRIED WOMEN WORKERSGENERAL BACKGROUND

1. Age: _____ 2. Place of Birth: _____
3. Education: _____
 - a. Primary School
 - b. Junior High School
 - c. Attending High School
 - d. High School
 - e. Junior College/College
 - f. No response
4. Parents living: _____
 - a. Both alive
 - b. Only father alive
 - c. Only mother alive
 - d. Both dead
 - e. No response
5. Siblings: Boys: _____ Girls: _____ Position: _____
6. Living arrangement: _____
 - a. Parent's house
 - b. Dormitory
 - c. With siblings
 - d. With friends
 - e. Relative's house
 - f. Room & board
 - g. Factory living quarters
 - h. Other
 - i. No response
7. Monthly Income: _____
8. Religion: _____
 - a. Protestant
 - b. Buddhist
 - c. Catholic
 - d. None
 - e. Other
 - f. No response
9. Use of income: (Ranking)
 - Own living expense: _____
 - Support for parents: _____
 - Financing siblings education: _____
 - Dowry: _____
 - Financing own education: _____
 - Other: _____

PAST EMPLOYMENT

10. Age at first employment: _____
11. Reason for starting work: _____
- a. Main support
 - b. Partial support
 - c. Sibling's education
 - d. Dowry saving
 - e. Education
 - f. To be independent
 - g. For experience
 - h. Other
 - i. No response
12. First job: _____
- a. Electronics
 - b. Textile/Clothing
 - c. Shoes
 - d. Metalworking
 - e. Precision tools
 - f. Heavy machinery
 - g. Other
 - h. No response
13. No. of job changes: _____
- a. Once
 - b. Twice
 - c. Three times
 - d. Four times
 - e. Five times or more
 - f. None
 - g. No response
14. Reason for changing jobs: _____
- a. Low pay
 - b. Company closed
 - c. Ill treatment
 - d. Strenuous work
 - e. Poor working conditions
 - f. Fired
 - g. Cutbacks
 - h. Education
 - i. Other
 - j. No response

PRESENT EMPLOYMENT

15. Starting date of present job: _____
16. Present employer: _____
17. Source of present job: _____
- a. Connection
 - b. Newspaper
 - c. Bulletin board
 - d. Training school
 - e. Government placement
 - f. Other
 - g. No response

FUTURE PLANS

18. Plan to work after marriage: _____
- a. No
 - b. Will decide later
 - c. Yes
 - d. No response
19. Reason for expecting to leave job market: _____
20. Plan to work after marriage if childcare provided: _____
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Will decide later
 - d. No response
21. Age of expected marriage: _____
22. Type of expected marriage: _____
- a. Arranged
 - b. Love
 - c. Both
 - d. No response
23. Most important factor in choice of future husband: _____
- a. Character
 - b. Education
 - c. Family background
 - d. Money
 - e. Religion
 - f. No response

APPENDIX B QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MARRIED WOMENGENERAL BACKGROUND

1. Age: _____ 2. Place of Birth: _____
3. Education: _____
 - a. Primary School
 - b. Junior High School
 - c. High School
 - d. Junior College/College
 - e. No response
4. Marital Status: _____
 - a. Consensus relationship
 - b. Legal marriage
 - c. Widowed
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Separated--personal reason
 - f. Separated--job related reason
 - g. No response
5. Marriage Type: _____
 - a. Arranged
 - b. Love
 - c. Both
 - d. No response
6. Number of Children: Boys: _____ Girls: _____
7. Household Members: _____
 - a. Husband & children
 - b. Husband, children, & parents-in-law
 - c. Husband, children, & husband's family
 - d. Husband, children, & own parents
 - e. Other
 - f. No response
8. Monthly Income: Husband's: _____ Own: _____
9. Husband's Job: _____
10. Own Job: _____
 - a. Housewife
 - b. Office worker
 - c. Factory worker
 - d. Small business
 - e. Market vendor
 - f. Saleswoman
 - g. Other
 - h. No response

11. Cooking Laundry Cleaning Childcare Dishes Other

	Cooking	Laundry	Cleaning	Childcare	Dishes	Other
Husband	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no
In-Laws	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no
Self	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no
Children	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no
Others	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no

12. Living arrangement: _____

- a. Own house
- b. Deposit lease
- c. Monthly rent
- d. Parents-in-law's house
- e. Parent's house
- f. No response

13. Religion: _____

- a. Protestant
- b. Buddhist
- c. Catholic
- d. None
- e. Other
- f. No response

PAST EMPLOYMENT

14. Age at first employment: _____

15. Reason for starting work: _____

- a. Main support
- b. Partial support
- c. Sibling's education
- d. Dowry saving
- e. Education
- f. To be independent
- g. For experience
- h. Other
- i. No response

16. First job: _____

- a. Electronics
- b. Textile/Clothing
- c. Shoes
- d. Metalworking
- e. Precision tools
- f. Heavy machinery
- g. Other
- h. No response

17. No. of job changes: _____
a. Once
b. Twice
c. Three times
d. Four times
e. Five times or more
f. None
g. No response
18. Reason for Changing jobs: _____
a. Low pay
b. Company closed
c. Ill treatment
d. Strenuous work
e. Poor working conditions
f. Fired
g. Cutbacks
h. Education
i. Other
j. No response
19. Reason for leaving job market: _____
a. Marriage
b. Boredom
c. Family problems
d. No response

PRESENT EMPLOYMENT

20. Starting date of present job: _____
21. Present employer: _____
22. Source of present job: _____
a. Connection
b. Newspaper
c. Bulletin board
d. Training school
e. Government placement
f. Other
g. No response
23. Reason for returning to job market: _____
a. Financial necessity
b. Personal satisfaction
c. Experience
d. No response

24. Difficulties with present work situation: _____
- a. Childcare
 - b. Low pay
 - c. Gender inequality
 - d. Husband disapproves
 - e. No response

PRESENT LIVING CONDITIONS

25. Satisfied with no. of children: _____
- a. Yes
 - b. No, wants son
 - c. No, wants daughter
 - d. No response
26. Contraception: _____
- a. Male sterilization
 - b. Female sterilization
 - c. Temporary methods
 - d. No contraception
 - e. No response
27. Infant feeding: _____
- a. Breast feeding
 - b. Formula
 - c. Both
 - d. No response
28. Plan to work when children are grown: _____
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not decided yet
 - d. No response
29. If both partners work, does husband help household chores?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No response

Comments: _____

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