

## Refereed article

# Contemporary Body Practices in South Korea: Subjection and Agency in Late Modernity

Joo-hyun Cho

## Summary

In this work, many peculiarities of the body practices sensationally advertised in South Korean media and often reported on in the West and other countries too are claimed to be largely the results of the drastic neoliberal restructuring of the whole society, which young women and men have had to undergo ever since the Asian financial crisis of 1997. Other social factors, including chronic problems in the medical industry itself, account for most of the remaining explanatory lacunae. After giving an overview of current forms of body practice and the socioeconomic terrain, as characterized by neoliberal restructuring and individualization, I will start my analysis by introducing “practice theory,” which explains social practices as a set of stable and evolving patterns within a community maintained by intersubjective normative judgments performed by its agents on their own performances. After a brief exposition of Brandom’s (1994) deontic scorekeeping model, I will explain the main characteristics of the social practices that this type of practice theory implies. Then I advocate for agonistic politics as the political implementation of practice theory, alongside briefly commenting on its implications for feminist politics. With the necessary theoretical tools set up, I explain what intuitions practice theory and agonistic politics offer on the issue of body practices, as the problem specifically of subjection and agency in this late modern Korean landscape. Finally, I conclude by exploring the creative space that the new social practices made possible by young Korean women are now opening up. This discussion is complemented with due caution on possible pitfalls that necessarily accompany such attempts at building new practices, and threaten to reduce them to retrogressive degeneracy.

**Keywords:** South Korea, body practices, neoliberalization, practice theory, agonistic politics, subjection and agency

**Joo-hyun Cho** is a professor of Women’s Studies at Keimyung University in Daegu, South Korea. She received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests are feminist theory, feminist Science and Technology Studies, as well as qualitative methods. She has recently published a new book on practice theory and feminist politics.

## Introduction

Body practices, including beauty practices and cosmetic surgery, are one of the core focal sites where competing theories of subjection and agency are offered — but without one particular theory dominating in its explanatory efficacy, just as with pornography (Allen 2001; Heyes 2007). Thus it was no exaggeration when, in 2009, Amy Allen (2009) claimed feminist theory had been obsessed with its theories of subjection and agency for at least the past 25 years. Or make it 35 years. However now I believe such a theory has been slowly forming its conceptual structures during the last century in fact, and has started to reveal its full scope in recent years. It is developed out of reflective equilibrium between intuitions from diverse disciplines, and feminist theorists have made important contributions to its development. I term it henceforth “practice theory” (Cho, Joo-hyun 2018).<sup>1</sup>

Just as pragmatism, its principal philosophical component, also strives for, practice theory explains various human experiences — including cognitive, ethical, political, and aesthetic ones — in a unified manner through the symbolic structure of social practices. Practice theory provides a theory of the subject that is flexible enough to explain away the paradoxes surrounding the problem of subjection and agency, just as it rationalized away the epistemological problem of the subject and object as first formulated by Descartes. Practice theory does this therapeutic job by offering a full theory of human experiences and the social practices that are created by them and transform adaptively while still maintaining its structural stability.

Practice theory identifies the bare structural components of the mechanisms underlying social structures, and their transformation into social practices such as language, law, market, and norms. These social structures form the essential components of culture and society; essential in the sense that all other elements such as fashions are of historically accidental origins. These elements deserve our theoretical attention only in the case that they contribute to transformations of social practice, and hence are integrated into them. Of course the concrete forms of social practice, of culture, and of social structure depend on these accidental elements, and there are no theoretically objective ways of distinguishing essential components from inessential ones. But the main theoretical workhorse here will be the dynamics of social practices.

In this article I will attempt to illustrate the theoretical flexibility that practice theory allows us in dealing with the problem of subjection and agency, by examining the phenomena of body practices as well as the issues accompanying new types of women’s movement in South Korea.<sup>2</sup> The qualifier “body” here refers to those aspects of practices in Korea that have been rapidly growing in significance in

---

1 For references, see those in Cho, Joo-hyun (2018).

2 To be abbreviated as Korea in the following.

---

women's lives during the last two decades. To discuss the peculiar characteristics of body practices in Korea that differentiate them from those in, for example, Western countries, I have to start by discussing the neoliberal social restructuring that has also been going on during this period.

Korea had to go through such a drastic neoliberal restructuring of the whole society after the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which brought about devastating consequences in Korean society.<sup>3</sup> Whereas neoliberalization in Western, developed countries started mainly as a reaction to "the Keynesian welfare state regimes that emerged during the long postwar boom" (Jessop 1993: 7), neoliberalization in Korea meanwhile erupted abruptly as part and parcel of a bailout package from the IMF in 1997. With only about ten years to enjoy the fruits of the miraculous economic and political developments achieved in the three preceding decades, Koreans would never realistically have enough time here to form or invent necessary social practices suitable for an affluent society hard won mainly through the sacrifices of workers (Krugman 1994).

This prescription by the IMF brought about enormous changes in Korean society. Lifetime employment, which had been considered normal in many companies until then, suddenly became obsolete and many people were laid off. New college graduates could no longer expect to get decent jobs immediately after graduation, as their predecessors had. Though Korea was able to graduate from the "tyranny" of the IMF within a few years by repaying the loan, restructuring measures once started did not stop rolling. Instead, they turned into a wholesale neoliberal restructuring of society, and began to grind down every aspect of daily life in Korea — like the proverbial satanic mill predicted by Karl Polanyi (1944/2001) seven decades ago. Ineffective labor could not offer much resistance, and many families formerly situated in the middle class suddenly discovered themselves to be on the verge of falling into poverty.

Despite intermittent resistance, the last two decades have transformed Korean society into one almost unrecognizable to those familiar with the vibrant and proud country of the 1980s. Korean society saw widening social and economic disparities emerge, caused by unemployment and labor flexibility. In the labor market, the percentage of female nonregular workers and the number of married women fired as a result of restructuring started to increase rapidly. During this period, the divorce rate and average age at marriage began to rise, while the birthrate stayed at a record low. The Korean government's adoption of market-friendly social insurance policies

---

3 As a part of the Asian financial crisis that started in Thailand in July 1997, Korea suffered a severe currency-induced emergency — leading the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to step in. Though there is still no general agreement on the appropriateness and efficacy of the mainly neoliberal economic prescriptions known as the Washington Consensus, they unquestionably left indelible marks on every aspect of Korean society. In Korea, these events are commonly referred to as the "IMF crisis."

focused on the welfare of workers exacerbated the woes of those female nonregular workers ineligible for such insurance and of fulltime housewives excluded from the labor market, leaving them without any direct social welfare up until recently. This was also a period of deepening class, gender, and generational inequalities. For those wealthy enough to escape unscathed and even benefit from the financial crisis, the transformations occurring in Korea coincided with an accelerated transition to a postmodern consumer society; as one author proclaimed in 1999, “present Korean society is a heaven for consumers” (Yoon, Hye-Joon 1999: 189).

Meanwhile, as Korean society was trying to rapidly reorganize itself into a form optimized for the neoliberal system, interest in the human body began to grow. Ranging from lifestyle fads to diet foods, fitness to body care and cosmetic surgery, Korean society was flooded from every direction with interest in and discourse over the body. These changes of interest no longer remain as mere fads, but are likely here to stay. The deployment of the body in gender-specific forms contributed to widespread dieting and cosmetic surgery booms among women, regardless of their class status. In this context a healthy body, regular self-care, and sexual attractiveness serve as major attributes constituting a source of self-empowerment or human capital, to borrow neoliberal idioms. This implies that the source of self-empowerment is no longer based on the womanly virtues of traditional ethics, but on measurable and quantifiable factors such as height, weight, and body mass index. Thus women’s self-empowerment derives mainly from their body, in a context of strong competitiveness in the labor and marriage markets.

In a certain sense, body practices in Korea share common characteristics with those in Western countries — and there have already been a considerable amount of studies, both theoretical and empirical, on these phenomena. Though Korea has its own unique cultural and historical traditions as well as experiences, her social, political, and economic environments have become quite similar to those of Western countries in many aspects as the rapid economic and political modernization, neoliberal restructuring, and globalization processes have unfolded. This allows many analyses done by previous authors to be applied in more or less unmodified forms to the present case. Thus, for example, the debate between Susan Bordo and Kathy Davis over the issue of how to appropriately interpret the subjection and agency of women undergoing cosmetic surgery is still relevant in the Korean terrain (Heyes 2007).

What I claim in this work is that many peculiarities of body practices sensationalized in Korean media and often reported on in the West and other countries too can be explained largely as the results of the aforementioned drastic neoliberal restructuring of the whole society that young women and men have had to undergo. Other social factors, including chronic problems in the medical industry itself, can account for most of the remaining explanatory lacunae.

For this purpose, I will first give an overview of current forms of body practice along with the outlining of a socioeconomic terrain characterized by neoliberal restructuring and individualization in the next section. Following on, I then start by introducing practice theory — explaining social practices as a set of stable and evolving patterns within a community maintained by the intersubjective normative judgments performed by its agents on their own acts. After a brief exposition of Brandom's (1994) deontic scorekeeping model, I will thereafter explain the main characteristics of the exact social practices that this type of practice theory implies. Then, I will advocate for agonistic politics as the political implementation of practice theory, alongside a brief comment on the implications for feminist politics. I will then proceed to explain what intuitions practice theory and agonistic politics offer on the issues of body practices, as specifically the problem of subjection and agency in this late modern Korean landscape. Finally, I conclude by exploring the creative space that the new social practices, made possible by young Korean women and evolving from their agency, are now opening up. This discussion is complemented with due caution on the possible pitfalls that necessarily accompany such attempts at building new practices and threaten to reduce to retrogressive degeneracy their attempts hard won by the gender politics deployed by the Korean women's movement in recent decades.

## **Contemporary body practices in Korea**

As reported on in my previous work (Cho, Joo-hyun 2009), body practices in Korea have become one of the most important concerns among Koreans since the 1990s. Body practices in Korea share most of the characteristics of those found in many developed countries in the West too, only operating in much more intense forms in the East Asian context. Among the factors contributing to this intensity, the peculiarity of a Korean healthcare system that has made cosmetic surgery and related fields very profitable for doctors is the simplest one to explain. I will start, then, with a discussion of its role herein.

The Korean public healthcare system is considered to be a quite efficient one, in that it provides nearly every resident of the country with fairly decent medical services at low cost. This system depends on the tight bureaucratic checks that limit the amount of fees reimbursed to doctors for their services essential to people's health, but it gives a free hand otherwise. Hence doctors are tempted to concentrate on profitable services of the latter nonessential kind. Due to the peculiarity of the public health service system, those services related, among other things, to body practices — especially cosmetic surgery — are very profitable. This has distorted the Korean

medical system significantly; as often reported, a plastic surgeon or dermatologist is paid better than a heart surgeon is.<sup>4</sup>

The profitability of these fields has induced many practicing doctors, even those with their majors in other fields of Medicine, to enter this profitable industry (Choi, Ok-Sun 2004; Lim, In-Sook 2010: 43). This has provided motivations and incentives for generating variegated forms of narratives of dubious authenticity in the cosmetic surgery industry. An example of these is cited in an analysis of the advertisements placed by cosmetic surgeons in women's magazines (Choi, Ok-Sun 2005). Here a woman's physical form is classified into three main categories of body, face, and skin, which are further partitioned into smaller categories of over 150 minute parts. Then, not only the exposed parts such as neck, shoulder, and the like but also those hidden by clothes such as the back, breasts, thighs, and even genitals are problematized as things needing to be fixed or at least improved.

For example, in case of eyes, the following 13 types of defects are listed, each with appropriate remedies including blepharoplasty: small eyes with fatty eyelids; ugly eyes with fatty eyelids; upward slanting, small, and narrow eyes; droopy eyelids; eyes with different sizes; downward slanting eyes; upward slanting eyes; eyes with inner eyelids; puffy lower eyelids; narrow space between eyes and eye brows; eyes with thin double eyelids and fatty upper eyelids; eyes with distinct double eyelids; eyes with thin double eyelids and wide upper eyelids. (Choi, Ok-Sun 2005: 92; quoted from Cho, Joo-hyun 2009: 32–33)

Naked commercial intention is too obvious for even the most ingenuous reader to miss here, but this is a typical disciplinary narrative of the kind that Foucauldian feminist scholars have been analyzing for years now. This meticulous classification and its accompanying criteria, often involving detailed numerical ones, are common characteristics of the tactics deployed by disciplinary power — being furthermore intensified by the neoliberalization that drives each individual to optimize her behaviors within the social conditions that she is situated within (Lemke 2002: 61). As pointed out in my previous work (Cho, Joo-hyun 2009), meticulous classifications of problematics and the transformation of them into measurable and quantified data that makes the self-assessment essential for optimization convenient and efficient are also prevalent in other forms of body practice too — such as dieting (with or without exercise), job interviews for young women, and private marriage matching services.

---

4 This may sound incredible to those unfamiliar with the Korean health insurance system. In fact, it is difficult to compare the earnings of two groups of medical doctors objectively, since exact data is not known. But this is something of common knowledge among Koreans, including medical doctors, as claimed in the 2014 White Paper for the Korean Society for Thoracic & Cardiovascular Surgery. Despite efforts by those concerned, this situation does not seem to have improved much according to a newspaper article based on data from a headhunter site for medical doctors published the following year (Lee, Min-young 2015).

The use of a measurable and quantified collective yardstick for everyone is a familiar one for young Koreans preparing for college entrance. The college student selection process in Korea has been long based on the scores of a nationwide examination taken by high school seniors and held once a year. Considered the most important examination in Korea, even airplanes are not allowed to take off or land during its English oral test. This almost sacred importance attached to it, thus attracting some curious attention from foreign news media, is perfectly understandable for Koreans since college prestige — determined almost exclusively by the average scores of aspiring students — is considered to be the single most important factor determining subsequent success in society. Even though, through decade-long efforts by the government, the college student selection process has eventually begun to diversify, many Koreans — especially youths — are wary of the foul play that this diversification might invite.<sup>5</sup>

Since students (and their parents) invest so much time, money, and effort into entering prestigious colleges, those entering prestigious colleges have a strong incentive to attempt to gain as many accruing benefits as possible. This starts an ever-tightening loop of deleterious feedback. As a consequence, those unfortunate students that could not enter the most prestigious ones are exposed to discrimination based on college in almost every phase of their later life — in job interviews, in promotions, even in dating. Actually, almost everyone could become a victim of such discrimination since, once the typical process of meticulous classification — characteristic of neoliberal disciplinary power — takes over and the rankings of every college and also every major within each are determined, there will be always someone in a better college or with a superior major to the given one.

This anomalous social practice has a surprising ability to survive, by transforming and thus adapting to changing sociocultural environments even despite repeated waves of educational reform, including the most recent one, and is claimed to be a single-major cause of obstruction to the creation of new efficient social practices in every necessary subsystem in late modern Korean society. The rigid format of the nationwide examination that started all these processes is also blamed for stunting any remaining creativity among students. Though this phenomenon has a long history, its claw began to tighten with accelerating intensity only after the Asian financial crisis — and never turning back since.<sup>6</sup>

Note that these phenomena in Korea — where drastic and rapid neoliberal restructuring has kept going and, as a result, extreme competition in every corner and aspect of daily life is prevalent — are occurring at a unique level of intensity

---

5 This suspicion is shared by parents and students in China too, where a similar nationwide examination is in operation.

6 There have been numerous research projects done on the problems that this phenomenon of so-called examination hell and related ones are causing in Korea, the most recent being Lee, Kyung-sook (2017).

compared to other countries worldwide. All these phenomena imply the importance of neoliberalization and its accompanying logic of competition in explaining the peculiarities of body practices in Korea, such as flourishing cosmetic and fitness industries as well as an extremely high percentage of young women opting for cosmetic surgery and special diets. If these factors do indeed play significant roles in explaining the prevalence of body practices among young Korean women over the last two decades, their effects should also manifest too — in the form of distinctive patterns of diffusing body practices among other demographics, such as young men and/or elderly people.

Indeed recent research has revealed some interesting patterns in the changing tendencies vis-à-vis discrimination based on various accepted criteria including lookism; these findings could be interpreted as collaborating evidence for my own claims made here. According to the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) report based on surveys conducted in 2004 and in 2011, the top-four forms of discrimination that Koreans experience, listed in descending order of severity, are those based on: education level and college prestige; appearance; sexual orientation; and, disability according to women. For their male counterparts meanwhile, these are: education level and college prestige; sexual orientation; disability; and, appearance. In particular, discrimination based on education level and college prestige, appearance, and sexual orientation had become much more severe by 2011 as compared to in 2004. These results could be compared to the ones from Eurobarometer in 2009 that cited ethnic origin, age, disability, and sexual orientation as most prevalent. The KWDI report also points out that discrimination based on education level and college prestige as well as appearance are those peculiar to Korea, and are almost negligible in developed countries. As briefly discussed above, and in my previous work in more detail (Cho, Joo-hyun 2009), these two factors are also the two most indicative ones of escalating competition within neoliberalized Korean society (Kim, Tae-Hong et al. 2011).

Another survey conducted in 2015 on discrimination based on appearance, as well as on appearance- and aging-related anxieties, shows that there are no statistically significant gender differences in the numbers of those that: (1) have experienced discrimination based on appearance; (2) answered that appearance is an important factor in life; and, (3) responded that they felt anxious when imagining themselves aging. Even controlling in regression analysis for other factors such as age, family income, marital status, and the like did not reveal any gender differences herein either. The only result indicating a gender differentiation was on the level of self-satisfaction with appearance. As expected, men recorded higher levels thereof in a statistically significant sense (Lim, In-Sook 2015). I believe that these two survey results on various forms of prevalent discrimination corroborate my own claim that the intensity of body practices among Korean women can be explained as to a large degree the consequence of the noted drastic neoliberalization that has been going on

---

during the last two decades. One more recent issue will help convince readers further of my claim.

In Korea, the deployment of gender politics by feminists has led the Korean governments favorable (for various political reasons) to gender equality in the wake of the Asian financial crisis to successfully promulgate gender equality acts in quite a relatively short space of time. Now, to most young and middle-aged women gender equality is a natural part of everyday life; this attitude is shared by an increasing portion of the male population. Of course, there have been dissenting voices and backlashes — especially among young men in despair about escalating labor competition, increasing unemployment, and a rapidly dwindling number of regular jobs without prospects for age-old easy patriarchal comforts. Recently, incidents of violence against women — including a murder committed in public place by a young man suspected of suffering from mental illness and by male criminals — have attracted significant media attention alongside causing serious alarm among women themselves. This was considered by some feminists as a warning of the ever-present possibility of retrogression from the gender equality previously hard won by the Korean women's movement (Lee, Na-Young 2016).

I would rather consider this phenomenon as indicative more of the intensity of a neoliberal competition that induces these men to seek easy targets and weak spots within society to let off steam, than as representative of an attempt to reverse the achievements hitherto by feminists. For example, some young men have recently re-raised the issue of receiving compensation for the sacrifices incurred by the compulsory military service of at least two years that is imposed on males — that by giving a specific additional score in the examination for public servants to those applicants who have completed the military service ("veterans extra-point system"). Since the accelerating shortage of regular or stable jobs makes public service ones very attractive — especially among college graduates, with dozens of applicants competing for each position — this has the potential to be a highly sensitive issue for certain young men.

On previous occasions, feminist scholars have raised their voices against such a policy — arguing that it will unnecessarily restrict the right to equal opportunities for women and handicapped men, who are both excluded or exempt from military service. This is what led to the repeal of the original policy in the first place. Though the recent push for its re-adoption never amounted to a serious threat, I believe this and the other phenomena discussed above clearly point to the necessary reorientation of feminist political strategies relying on gender politics — as currently practiced in most countries around the globe.

Though I have restricted my discussion to social phenomena in Korea, starting with body practices, as I have emphasized several times now these are not unique to Korean sociocultural terrain — only occurring in more intensified forms there due

to rather an abrupt history of neoliberalization, and hence offering a perfect chance to scrutinize an essential underlying mechanism. I claim the relevant lessons we can draw from my discussions on body practices in Korea, and in other countries besides, should be that feminist theories as well as politics based on gender politics are seriously deficient — and thus incapable, at least in their present forms, of coping with women's issues in ways that pay due appreciation to their new types of agency in late modernity.

This is also revealed in the ambivalent and often paradoxical responses by feminists (McRobbie 2008) to new femininities and postfeminism (Gill and Scharff 2011). The root of the problem facing feminist theories and politics goes back to the issue of the subjection of women that has been preoccupying feminist scholars for decades now (Allen 2009). Though attempts at new feminist theories and politics have been articulated by a number of authors — including Amy Allen (2008), Cressida Heyes (2007), and Linda Zerilli (2005) among others — I will advocate for the need for a more fundamental reorientation. The version of feminist theory and feminist politics that my theoretical efforts are moving toward to is based on practice theory and agonistic politics. Since my version of practice theory is modified and improved out of conventional such theories, and given that agonistic politics is its political implementation, or more precisely a part of an integrated framework, then I will now present both of these — albeit in rough form — in the following two sections.

## **Practice theory and agonistic politics**

Practices are “the vanishing point of twentieth-century philosophy” according to Stephen Turner (1994: 1). He goes on to point out that: “The major philosophical achievements of the century are now widely interpreted as assertions about practices, even though they were not originally couched in this language” (Turner 1994: 1). Anyone trying to capture this concept in a succinct set of words will find herself in the situation described in the Indian story of the blind men and an elephant. Practices<sup>7</sup> were variously called habitus, norms, institutions, traditions, life forms, forms of life, worldviews, paradigms, ideologies, tacit knowledge, frameworks, coping skills, know-how, and presuppositions to cite but a few well-known ones. Each of these concepts has been invented to emphasize characteristics of practice deemed to be crucial to the concept. The bewildering number of authors working on practice theories in almost every academic discipline shows the futility of attempting to construct a theory of practices that encompasses of all the characteristics that these scholars have hitherto thought important. As such, the right approach seems to be rather to search for the basic structure common to all practices that these authors believe essential in their theoretical frameworks.

---

7 Sometimes I myself term these social practices, to emphasize their social character.

An elusive concept such as practice can be better focused on by contrasting it with what it is not. In my previous work, I sketched three sources or components that comprise the kind of practice theory that I am aiming for — this brief exposition here is a chance to contrast my version of practice theory with other ones currently in use. The three main components comprising my version of practice theory, which I term specifically “the theory of social practices as symbolic complex adaptive systems,” are identified as: social practice theory; philosophical pragmatism (as influenced by the tradition of German idealism); and, phenomenology. These are further modified by the recent developments in Cognitive Science and in Evolutionary Psychology, as well as by theories of complex adaptive systems.

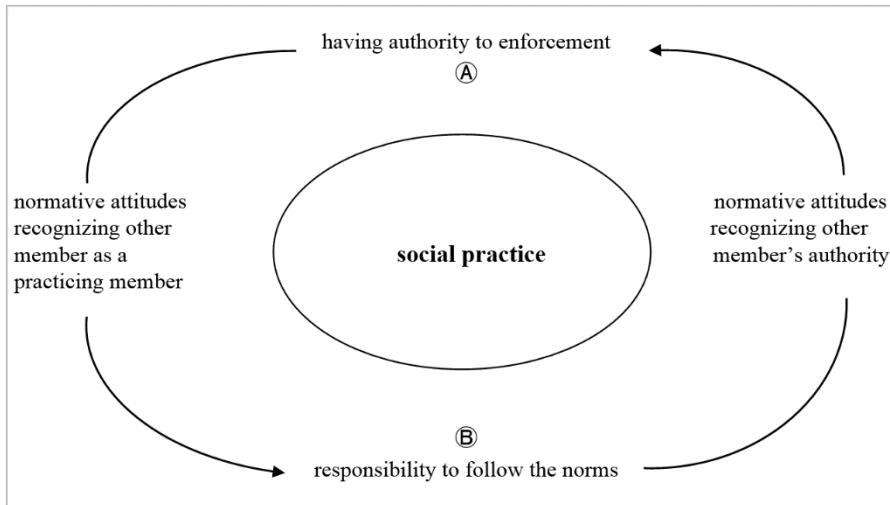
Here, I start by giving a temporary definition of practice theory. Practice theory explains the diverse social norms and institutions essential for the successful operation of a society, thus crucially involving social practices — which consist of a set of stable and evolving patterns of behavior, ones maintained by the intersubjective normative judgments performed by their actors on their acts. The only requirement placed on this system of interlocking normative judgments is that it should satisfy the rules of what Sellars called the “game of giving and asking for reasons” (Brandom 1994: 159). This requirement is the bare-bone structure that keeps normative judgments rational, and hence the social practices maintained by them efficient. This minimum requirement is also maximal, in the sense that any additional requirements or structures we may attempt to impose on this system will necessarily restrict the space of possibilities that the resulting social practice can explore — and eventually limit its efficiency and creativity.

Detailing what these rules explicitly mean was the main aim of the work of Robert Brandom (1994). In the following I will give only a brief summary of Brandom’s theory of discursive practices, which forms the core part of my practice theory; I refer the reader to my other work for a detailed discussion of the three main components hereof and how they are combined together in a single framework (Cho, Joo-hyun 2018).<sup>8</sup> Within this, a specific model focused on is Brandom’s deontic scorekeeping one (1994: 141–198).

---

8 Of course, three components do not form a clear-cut classification and many theories and authors, especially those belonging to social practice theory and philosophical pragmatism, could be arguably classified into any one of them. As is well known, this group of authors and theories frequently influence and owe intellectual debts to each other.

**Figure 1. A model for social practices according to Brandom**



Source: author

Here a member of a social practice, recognized as its practitioner by other members, takes responsibility for following the norm. Other members' authority to impose responsibility upon her through their recognition is thus effective only through her recognition. The normative dependence of reciprocal responsibility and authority among members can attain normative status beyond subjectivity, thus is sufficient to constitute social practices.

Thus recognized and acknowledged, each member keeps scores for all members — including herself. These scores consist of commitments and entitlements acknowledged by a member and attributed by a scorekeeper. Here each member constructs score functions by scoring and recording her and other members' commitments and entitlements and collecting them. Score functions determine both the process that determines the meaning of each performance through their scores at each moment and the process that changes judgment criteria, ascribing appropriate commitments and entitlements to each member. This completes the feedback loop that turns each member's performance into an object of judgment, and that also affects the norms serving as judgment criteria for such an evaluating of each and every performance.

The implications of Brandom's model for social practices are as follows. An "inefficient" social practice in a society is an accumulated result of judgments on social norms (as judgment criteria) by each member at the moment of normative judgment. The point of resistance against an inefficient social practice within a society — leading to its transformation, annihilation, or the creation of a whole new

---

social practice — resides in the moment of judgment by each member. Each should realize that the moment of rational reconstruction of social practice through each judgment is exactly the moment of determining what kind of “better” society she wants to belong to.

From its origins in classical pragmatism, which forms a core part of what I am advocating in this work, practice theory started as a coherent framework comprising both the theoretical critique of epistemology and the principled methods for dealing with moral and political practices. Therefore practice theory provides a systematic perspective on these political practices. In the remainder of this section, I will hence discuss the political implications of social practices as a means of achieving efficiency in society. I posit that agonistic politics, advocated for previously by various political theorists, is the only political implementation of practice theory faithful to its insights. Politics in the most general sense concerns the transformation of social practices, including formal institutions, so as to achieve an efficient society. Here efficiency is not restricted to the narrow concept adopted in economics. There are no permanent criteria for it. The only limit to the variety of efficiency possible within a given society is the imagination of its “mature” citizens, which can change continuously at every moment of their normative judgments on the rules or criteria applied to social practices.

I will start from two concepts of freedom: negative freedom from varied social and natural constraints, and the positive freedom to do something. The latter is “obtainable only by constraining oneself by the conceptual norms implicit in discursive social practices” (Brandom 2009: 74). The first perspective is based on instrumental rationality and regards the legitimacy of each individual’s desire as beyond rational analysis or outside of intelligent discussion, thus insisting on concentrating on the issue of choosing the most efficient way to satisfy desire. On the other hand, in the second perspective, each individual is regarded as the subject of discursive practices and their performances — while their accompanying responsibility, commitment, entitlement, and acknowledgement collectively determine the meanings of rational acts. This second perspective also accepts “the capacity to bind oneself by conceptual norms, to undertake responsibility, to make commitments, to exercise and acknowledge authority as the core of the freedom” (Brandom 2009: 143). Brandom claims that Hegel transformed this Kantian concept of positive freedom into “expressive positive freedom,” adding the following three aspects to it: normative status as essentially social status; the importance of discursive practices as the paradigmatic exercise of that Kantian positive freedom; and, the possibility of “self-conscious self-constituting self-transformation” (Brandom 2009: 144–146) — that is, making themselves be different by taking themselves to be different. Following Kant and Hegel, Brandom thus also emphasizes expressive positive freedom — the enabling aspect of positive freedom

made possible by social practices and the possibility of self-conscious self-constituting self-transformation.

An important point to note here is that it is possible to transform social practices through the expressive positive freedom allowed to us by discursive practices. Though social practices are sources for positive freedom, they can also serve to sustain “wrong” or “inefficient” ones too. Both the possibility of problematic social practice and the creativity of positive freedom through social practice are ineluctable twin aspects of the same thing: the absence of objective criteria, or God’s point of view. The absence of a freestanding foundation means that each new performance in social practice could be either a predicative moment of politics or a retrogressive moment of deterioration, with no comprehensive doctrines that can guarantee the desired better world. Foucault’s all-too-famous remarks are perspicacious on exactly this:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger. (1983: 231–232)

The fact that there are no comprehensive and algorithmic doctrines that allow us “to determine which is the main danger,” thus guaranteeing a better world, implies that neoliberal governmentality — with its capillary manners of power operation — and expressive positive freedom share social practices as a network of channels and conduits for operation. This makes such governmentality all the more difficult to resist. For instance, as Butler (1997) has stated, psychic attachments that contribute to the perpetuation of relations of domination and subordination originate from a desire for recognition. But this itself emerges from the social interactions that women are engaging in, which in turn are determined by the fact social practices form basic frameworks to interpret and assign meaning to individual lives. Thus social practices serve as resources for the self-empowerment of female subjectivity, as well as simultaneously causes for its continuing subordination. An important point here is that social practices enable expressive positive freedom through discursive practices, offering valuable tools for transforming the very ones that made such freedom possible in the first place. Although this approach may not seem to be that significant, and may exasperate representationalists and those in support of identity politics, this framework actually offers both the most efficient and creative tools for a “better” world — and is moreover the only one available to us, as practice theorists have often reminded us.

If Foucault’s practice theory articulated the constituted character of subjectivity through his concept of power, Brandom’s own one tried to reveal the twin aspects of the constitution and agency of the subject residing in each performance — that through the concept of positive freedom. Viewed from the perspective of the latter,

social practices — functioning through operations of power — reveal their positive role of enabling women to live as social beings and to serve as sources for creative self-constitution and self-transformation. This implies ample possibilities to (over)compensate for the loss of negative freedom, as ensuing from complying with institutions and norms, by increasing its positive variant instead (Brandom 2009: 52–77). Of course, the similarity of these concepts to those of the market economy is not accidental — and both cases will be seen as manifestations of one common, basic phenomenon when a general theory of social practices eventually comes to be completed.

Facing no comprehensive prescriptions for political decisions, what will the most “efficient” procedure for decision-making be? We have already seen Zerilli’s (2012) proposal for political action to initiate transformations of “anomalous” social practices or to overthrow domination. We can generalize and formalize her strategy to deal with the problem specifically of political decision-making procedures. Agonistic politics that are willing to lay everything down on the table — including the rules of the game and decision-making procedures — as well as to question everything will arguably be the best bet. In liquid modernity, where each individual cannot be sure of what she desires, only agonism as a sublimation of antagonism can hope to satisfy each desire efficiently by opening up creative space in politics. Raising issues, arguing for her claims, endeavoring for clarification, and raising objections in confrontation — with no consensus or conclusion being enforced — will provide eventually “optimal” political results, if successful. Practice theory, which as noted forms the theoretical foundation for agonistic politics, suggests there are no predetermined criteria allowing people to classify each performance as an instance of subjection or self-transformation. This fact reveals the necessity of a more detailed theory of action and of decision-making processes, comprised specifically by practice theory (Brandom 2009: 144–146; quoted from Cho, Joo-hyun 2013: 92).

Perhaps a comparison of agonistic and deliberative politics will bring these issues into sharp relief. Though deliberative politics share many characteristics with agonistic politics, such as the emphasis on political deliberations, the former refuse to give up the idea of public reason as a final arbitrator to resort to. Deliberative politics agree, implicitly or explicitly, that the political issues on the table for consideration should be restricted to “reasonable” claims and procedures, and that furthermore methods of deliberation should be based on some form of criteria agreed upon by “reasonable” members of the community. Agonistic politics, meanwhile, reject these hopes as impossible, since “agreement on procedures or a public conception of justice (and hence what counts as a ‘reasonable’ claim) is made possible only insofar as members of a society already share a common ‘form of life’” (Schaap 2006: 264), as Wittgenstein taught us.

As we can see in these cases, the “reasonableness” requirement can serve both as a regulative idea and as a tool of exclusion. Of course, in “normal” situations, this requirement works as a means to increase efficiency in political deliberations and decision-making, but there is absolutely no way of judging when a given situation is normal or abnormal prior to the real-time context of the event. As noted above, we cannot have both efficiency and justice then.

In late modernity, where the desires of each individual change in fleeting ways and you cannot be sure of what you yourself inherently want without first receiving a cue from commercial advertising, setting the political goals that most reasonable members of a community agree upon and settling on the prescriptions that can achieve those goals through the procedure of “reflective equilibrium” (Rawls 1971) may not always be practicable. Even in “normal” situations this approach will remain as “a boundary-secur ing activity” and will surely miss many creative aspects of “democratic-world-building” political practices (Zerilli 2012). From the perspective of practice theory, whether an individual’s behavior is pre-constituted or is rather a result of her agency depends on how the members of a given community judge the performance and the social practices that the action is a part of. This is because the social practice that affects each performance — whether it is a norm, convention, or ideology — is determined and transformed by the scorekeeping activities of each member of the community. Agonistic politics help each member become aware of this fact, consciously or unconsciously, by offering public agons over political issues.

Accepting the arguments of practice theory and agonistic politics, namely that subjection and agency are not determined by predetermined rules, naturally leads us to the conclusion that the concept of power based on the dichotomy of domination-subordination is incapable of understanding the diverse actions of women in late modernity across every dimension. For better theoretical tools with which to work through Butler’s (1997) so-called paradox of subjectivation, or to scrutinize the possibility of agency for women in subjection, it might be helpful to start by introducing two concepts of power: “power of,” denoting the power of domination-subordination, and “power to,” standing for the power to empower (Allen 2001: 527).

In the next section, I will examine what kinds of insight the perspectives of practice theory and agonistic politics offer on the current issues of body practices in Korean society.

## **Body practices from the perspective of practice theory and agonistic politics**

The women’s movement in Korea has been able to persuade the national government since the 1990s to legislate a series of acts on gender equality, with such rapidity that

these achievements can be proudly compared to the miraculous economic development that the country has also realized in recent decades. Whatever the exact reasons, as well as political and bureaucratic circumstances, for such a quick acceptance of gender equality policies may have been, such success would have been unimaginable without the intense and concerted efforts of the Korean women's movement during the last half-century. The main feminist strategies in this period have been based on gender politics, as they have been in other East Asian and Western developed countries too.

Though gender politics comprise rather a sophisticated set of concepts, including intersectionality and strategies that possibly overlap with those advocated for by the practice turn,<sup>9</sup> their main efficacy as feminist politics is derived in fact from the emphasis on the oppressed conditions that women are subjected to in varied aspects of their political, economic, and cultural lives. Gender politics resist against these, and ultimately aim to liberate women from them through collective struggles. Their efficiency as feminist political strategies is necessarily proportional to the emphasis on women as a single political category; the success of gender politics led to an intensification of this tendency. But implications of the practice turn for feminist politics let us locate gender politics within a whole spectrum of available possible strategies to resist, transform, and annihilate anomalous social practices manifested in the form of various injustices and inequalities — and to create new ones too. Throughout the modern age Western countries have fairly successfully removed these injustices and inequalities, or at least drastically improved the life conditions of those suffering from them. Most of the East Asian countries have achieved more or less similar successes in an incomparably short period of time, as has their economic development been too. There is no denying that strategies based on identity politics have been the main tools for the various successes.

Now, is identity politics going to remain the main leverage for the women's movement and for that matter an oppressed group of people who have to speak out and resist against the injustice and inequality confronting them? In late modernity, to borrow a conceptually ambiguous term that nevertheless allows us to concentrate on the fundamentally transformed characteristics of the new social environments that we are currently experiencing (Giddens 1984; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), the answer seems to be in the negative. Late modernity was initially described as rather gloomy and a life in it appeared to be a bleak one indeed (Bauman 2000). Within the women's movement, a corresponding picture is drawn in the specific form of new femininities and postfeminism — threatening to obliterate the hard-won achievements of previous decades (McRobbie 2008; Gill and Scharff 2011).

However, late modernity has been also accepted as a new era of more efficient society, not in the narrow sense typically used in the disciplines of Economics and

9 For more details on this issue, see Alcoff (2000).

Business Administration but in the wider sense of allowing better opportunities for undertaking creative and free lives for more people. For example, Connolly (2002) advises those feeling ambiguous and insecure about the dangerously fast pace of life in late modernity that, instead of being tempted to resort to fundamentalisms, they should rather become democratic pluralists — and embrace the positive potentialities of speed, while simultaneously working to attenuate its most dangerous effects. From the perspective of practice theory, with its view of social practices as the main mechanisms and tools for the stable and efficient operation of society, a mature citizenship in each era consists of abilities to imagine and create new practices that other members are aspiring to and groping for — and to judge acceptable optimal tradeoffs between the two competing requirements of stability and efficiency.

Therefore, an evolving society should expect its social practices to change — while its members should be able to initiate transformations of their practices based on normative judgments on each other's acts and on judgment criteria. The lessons from practice theory are that moral indignation — at injustice and inequality — and resistance against their reform are related to indignation at the unthinking inefficiency of selfish greed and the worries about instability thus caused respectively. Which lesson should prevail depends on the specific era that a society is in, and the maturity of its citizens. The recommendation for late modernity by those, like Connolly, in support of agonistic politics is that, with most obvious injustices and inequalities removed or condemned by mature citizens, we have a lot to expect from the freedom and creativity thus opened up by adopting these agonistic politics and the pluralism that they advocate for.

Traditionally feminist politics has been reluctant to rely on an argument based on efficiency or rationality.<sup>10</sup> This is reasonable, since the efficiency — especially economic — of a social practice depends on the other practices established and already in operation that together form the prevalent culture in a given society. Now I am claiming that the practice turn of feminist theories and the agonistic turn of feminist politics will provide widened concepts of efficiency and rationality to include also the future economic and social benefits generated, specifically by incorporating such new practices. What I want to particularly emphasize here is that this turn in methodology and politics will allow feminists to avoid the pitfalls that Connolly (2002) warned against, ones that were originally created out of the fictitious straitjacket imposed only due to unnecessarily narrow theoretical frameworks hitherto.

From the perspective of practice theory and agonistic politics, we can discern quite new aspects of the current body practices in Korea earlier presented. There have been many changes in women's lives that have made this perspective particularly

---

10 On this issue, see Folbre (1993).

relevant in Korea. The current generation of young women are a group of highly educated individuals, with the number of them entering college surpassing that of boys every year. Most of the women graduating college intend to enter the job market. The number of them entering highly coveted professions, including medical, legal, educational, and public ones, is rapidly increasing. Most of the women of the most recent generation have taken Women's Studies 101 during their college years, or are at least familiar with feminist ideas through various mediums — including TV dramas and the media. The strong preference for baby boys prevalent two decades ago is now almost entirely reversed. These women's experience of having witnessed old, anomalous social practices slowly transforming into new ones as they were growing up will serve as valuable resources in the reaching for and creating of future such ones.

For most of these young women, many worries voiced by previous generations of feminists wary of retrogression to the old days of patriarchal power are unnecessary or even laughable relics of a bygone era. Though they are still frustrated by ongoing discrimination in the job market and in the workplace for example, and despair about the "work-family conflict," they are very proud and independent — never intending to go back to the olden days of the previous generation. These young women, driving the main discourses on body practices, learned better the knack of how to initiate changes in practices and to evoke responses from others. We need to wait at least a few decades to see whether women of a younger generation can solve the problem of transforming these anomalous practices — obviously a much more difficult task to attack, too.

The first indication that a new generation of young women may be different from the previous ones can be discerned in the Candlelight Demonstration of 2008. This began as a protest against the government's policy on importing American beef, with the number of demonstrators ranging from several hundred to several hundred thousand each day and lasting for two months. What attracted attention from the media was the fact that about 70 percent of both the initial and later participants were women — including teenage students, the "Army of High Heels" and the "Army of Baby Strollers" in their twenties and thirties, as well as housewives in their forties and fifties. There were several contributing factors to this new phenomenon. The political issues were relatively "safe" ones, and emerged out of everyday life. This brought many participants, for example, from online women's communities where members had been discussing varied topics from daily life — such as childcare, fashion, and cosmetics. These members of online communities had been gaining experience in political practices, learning how to voice out their opinions, form judgments, present responses, or raise refutations on their everyday issues — and were thus better prepared to deal with political issues in a socially practical manner. In other words, through their online community activities these women were transforming the meanings of consumer and everyday life culture rather than just

remaining as mere passive consumers of neoliberalized social life. This new pattern of demonstration is not just a passing one but here to stay. Most of the subsequent demonstrations that attracted public attention and participation followed a similar pattern too.

In contrast, most of the demonstrations initiated by labor union and progressive activists clung fastidiously to the strategies that had been quite effective during the pre-democratization period. These groups of activists were mainly led by men, and generally regarded gender equality as only a secondary issue; prejudice and sexual violence against women among them have been chronic issues — with little sign of improvement. A relatively new type of progressive activists, with a different sociocultural background, began to appear about a decade ago. They relied on internet broadcasting and social networking services to raise political and social issues. Some of them received applause from people who were delighted at the prospect of new types of political engagement emerging, including many women overlapping as participants in the Candlelight Demonstration too. Of course, the latter group of women expected these activists to be better prepared or educated on gender equality than their predecessors.

In 2012 disputes over the issue of sexist remarks made by several popular progressive activists occurred between those critical of them regarding the incident as another case of inveterate gender ignorance on the part of many so-called progressives, and those claiming that it is time to outgrow the tendency to regard every sexual remark cast as an instance of sexual violence (Kim, Soojin 2013). This occurrence evoked a considerable amount of interest and comments from both sides. During the continuing disputes, the mega online women's cosmetics, beauty, and fashion interest community "SamgugKape" — with members mostly in their twenties and thirties — issued an open letter on this dispute. In it, advice and warnings to both progressive activists represented by Nakkomsu in particular and the conservative mass media in general were given by an online community that had played a leading role in the Candlelight Demonstration of 2008. It contained unusually well-balanced — though strict — judgments on the issue. I believe this occurrence is one of a few signs reflecting the political maturity and self-confidence that have been growing among the new generation of women for quite some time now.

From the perspective of practice theory, the aims of the women's movement might change rather frequently and thus its strategies should also be adjusted accordingly. The movement should be able to afford varied political practices and competing strategies. The true practical meaning of this incident ("Nakkomsu-bikini siwi sageon") <sup>11</sup> resides in the discovery of possibilities for diverse coexisting

---

11 Nakkomsu-bikini siwi sageon (Nakkomsu-bikini demonstration incident) refers to an incident when some ardent women supporters of demonstrations urging the release of former Congressman Chung

interpretations, without significantly reducing the effectiveness of our pursuit of gender equality. This group of women showed the same kind of intuitions gained solely by relying on their own experiences and resources, including intense discussions among themselves. These experiences will serve as a valuable stepping stone in the search for new ways of practicing politics by these women in the future.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

Neoliberal rationality, in enforcing economic logic over the sociocultural arenas, intends to solve the social problems confronted by individuals through individual and subjective measures rather than via a social structure approach. Thus when women in late modern Korean society pursue self-empowerment, they are usually induced to rely predominantly on easily quantifiable, and hence convenient, self-evaluation tools rather than unquantifiable ones — such as self-respect and self-confidence — to determine the progress of their efforts and to adjust them as appropriate. Each individual woman has to be constantly measured, judged, and trained to tune and interlock self-empowerment to collective measures easily.

As we have seen in the cases of the cosmetic surgery industry and other body practice ones besides, turning each problem into extensively classified and quantified data is to perform self-evaluation via extremely precise criteria, making self-confidence and

---

Bongju uploaded their bikini photos in response to the proposal jokingly thrown off by the broadcasters of a popular progressive internet broadcasting program called Nakkomsu. These broadcasters had been enjoying considerable amount of popularity among a coterie of progressive-minded citizens because of their humorous manners of analyzing political issues and critiques that, however, had invited suspicions of being sexists by their often problematic comments before. This time, they provoked strong critiques and protests by proposing the supporters of Chung to upload their photos to help him persevere his supposedly wrongful imprisonment. After famous woman novelist Kong Jiyong first demanded their apology and they were not readily persuaded that their comments were problematic, comments and critiques from various corners of the society including those by literary critics, male intellectuals, and feminists began to pour out in mass media and internet media. Thus this incident began to attract public attentions. This led to a climax when SamgugKape, one of the largest women-only internet communities and many members of which were also fans of Nakkomsu, uploaded an open letter of declaration criticizing Nakkomsu and withdrew its supports. This incident ended without a denouement when the leading broadcaster of Nakkomsu, Kim Eojoon, summarized their final opinion on this incident during his program, never admitting any wrong doing on their part.

12 Many commenters on my previous works have pointed out that here I am drawing an unusually sanguine picture of the young Korean woman's agency, and her ability to open up a niche for efficient social practices. Of course my practice theory emphasizes, as one of its core claims, the ever-present double risk that the attempting of a new social practice opens up. In that sense, I am not predicting but rather engaging in agonistic politics — as well as urging a magnanimous reading of her agency (Brandom 2013). I also believe that recent political events — including The Second Candlelight Movement in Korea, which succeeded in peacefully driving out former president Park along with the last remnants of an old and inefficient political regime, struggling to introduce new social practices — owe a lot to her agency, as revealed in the social movements of the last decade discussed in this paper.

self-empowerment possible and efficient. These in turn serve as essential means in late modernity to control each individual, as analyzed in detail by Foucault in his archaeological and genealogical works. Of course, as we have seen in this paper, this never-quenchable appetite for quantified criteria is one of the principal tools for rampant consumerism in late modernity, exactly to perpetuate its existence, serving as one of its primary producers. Constitution of the subjection and agency of women proceeds in these entangled ways. Consequently the estimation and interpretation of the performances of each female subject can be properly accomplished only within a framework comprising the whole spectrum of social practices.

If the defects and problems of neoliberalism originate mainly from ignoring the positive roles of social practices such as norms, institutions, and conventions, namely the possibility of positive freedom to transform social practices themselves, we can safely argue that their resolution will be possible only through reinvigorating these channels for the annihilation and transformation of current practices — and the creation of new ones. For this prescription to work properly, it is essential to maintain open attitudes to the performances of each individual member of the community, which can serve as a starting point for the whole process of transformation. For this, social awareness and the recognition of the creative role of “deontic scorekeeping” processes should spread widely among community members. I have claimed in this paper that this becomes possible through the implementation of agonistic politics in everyday social and political life, which is anyway the only available tool to us.

The “crisis” of feminist politics arose because, as a result of neoliberal globalization and governmentality, the reflexivity of women’s actions was strengthened — leading to a weakening of the explanatory power of the gender politics that had served well as quite an effective identity politics hitherto. This is especially true in the case of late modern Korean society. It is time now, then, for a more fundamental reformulation of gender politics’ theoretical framework. The outlooks and strategies of feminist politics should be based on a close understanding of the dynamic relations between political and economic circumstances on the one hand, and the subjectivity of women taking shape in changing social practices on the other. The perspective of practice theory promises to be helpful in this search for new feminist politics.

## References

Alcoff, Linda (2000): “Who’s Afraid of Identity Politics?”, in: Moyaand, Paula; Hames-Garcia, Michael (eds.): *Reclaiming Identity. Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 312–344

Allen, Amy (2001): “Pornography and Power”, in: *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 32: 512–531

— (2008): *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press

— (2009): “Feminism and the Subject of Politics”, in: Bruin, Boudewijn de; Zurn, Christopher (eds.): *New Waves in Political Philosophy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–18

Bauman, Zigmunt (2000): *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity

Beck, Ulrich; Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth (2002): *Individualization. Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences*. London: Sage

Brandom, Robert B. (1994): *Making it Explicit. Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

— (2009): *Reason in Philosophy. Animating Ideas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

— (2013): “Reason, Genealogy, and the Hermeneutics of Magnanimity”, Paper, University of California at Berkeley (Howison Lectures in Philosophy, March 13)

Butler, Judith (1997): “Introduction”, in: *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1–30

Cho, Joo-hyun (2009): “Neoliberal Governmentality at Work. Post-IMF Korean Society and the Construction of Neoliberal Woman”, in: *Korea Journal*, 49.3: 15–43

— (2013): “Neoliberal Globalization and the Transformation of Women’s Subjectivity. From the Perspective of Practice Theory”, in: Cho, Joo-hyun (ed.): *Gender in Transition*. Daegu: Keimyung University Press, 73–112

— (2018): *Jeongcheseong jeongchi-eseo agonijeum jeongchi-ro. yeoseonghak bangbeomnon-gwa peminijeum jeongchi-ui silcheonjeok jeonhwan* (From Identity Politics to Agonistic Politics. The Practice Turn of Feminist Methodology and Politics). Daegu: Keimyung University Press

Choi, Ok-Sun (2004): “Yeoseongjapi-e natanan mom damron yeongu: seonghyeonguiryo saneob-gwauigwallyeonseong-eul jungsim-euro” (An Analysis of Ideal-Body Discourse on Women’s Magazines: Focused on Its Relation to Cosmetic Surgery Industry), in: *Hanguk chulpanhak yeongu* (Studies of Korean Publishing Science), 46: 261–313

— (2005): *Yeoseong-ui mom damron-gwa seonghyeongdamron-ui sanghotekseuteuseong-e gwanhan yeongu: yeoseongjapi-ui gisa-wa seonghyeonguiryo gwanggo-reul jungsim-euro* (A Study on Intertextuality between Discourses on the Female Body and Plastic Surgery: Focusing on Female Magazine Articles and Medical Advertisement), PhD diss., Sungkyunkwan University

Connolly, William (2002): *Neuropolitics. Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Folbre, Nancy (1993): “Macro, Micro, Choice, and Structure”, in: England, Paula (ed.): *Theory on Gender / Feminism on Theory*. New York: Aldine Publishers, 323–330

Foucault, Michel (1983): “On the Genealogy of Ethics. An Overview of Work in Progress”, in: Dreyfus, Hubert L.; Rabinow, Paul (eds.): *Michel Foucault. Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 229–252

Giddens, Anthony (1984): *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Gill, Rosalind; Scharff, Christina (eds.) (2011): *New Femininities. Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan

Heyes, Cressida J. (2007): *Self-Transformations. Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*. New York: Oxford University Press

Jessop, Bob (1993): “Towards a Schumpeterian Welfare State? Preliminary Remarks on Post-Fordist Political Economy”, in: *Studies in Political Economy*, 40: 7–39

Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park, Geon-Pyo (2015): *2015 Hangug-ui seong inji tonggye* (2015 Gender Statistics in Korea). Seoul: KWDI (Korean Women’s Development Institute)

Kang, Isoo; Shin, Kyoung-ah; Park, Ginam (2015): *Yeoseong-gwa il* (Women and Work). Paju: Dongnyeok

Kim, Soojin (2013): “Aidi Jucheu(ID Subject)-wa yeoseong-ui jeongchijeok juchehwa. ‘nakkomsu-bikiniswi’ sageon-eul jungsim-euro” (The ID Subject and Women’s Political Subjectification. Reading “the Podcast Naggomsu-the Bikini Protest”), in: *Hanguk yeoseonghak* (Korean Journal of Women’s Studies), 29.2: 1–38

Kim, Tae-Hong et al. (2011): *Gukgyeok jego-reul uihan chabyeol eobneun sahoe giban guchuk* (An Analysis on Anti-Discrimination and Social Cohesion and Policy Recommendation). Seoul: KWDI (Korean Women’s Development Institute)

Krugman, Paul (1994): “The Myth of Asia’s Miracle”, in: *Foreign Affairs*, 73.6: 62–78

Lee, Kyung-sook (2017): *Siheomgugmin-ui tansaeng* (Birth of Examination People). Seoul: Pureun Yeoksa

Lee, Min-young (2015): “Jal naganeun uisa vs. mot naganeun uisa, yeonbong chaineun?” (What is the difference between a successful doctor and an unsuccessful doctor’s salary?), in: *Jungang ilbo* (Korea Joongang Daily), July 27, [http://jhealthmedia.joins.com/article/article\\_view.asp?pno=15303](http://jhealthmedia.joins.com/article/article_view.asp?pno=15303)

Lee, Na-Young (2016): “Yeoseong hyeommo-wa jendeo chabyeol, peminijeum. ‘gangnamyeok 10beon chulgu-reul jungsim-euro’” (Misogyny, Gender Discrimination, and Feminism. A Feminist Project of Social Justice surrounding the ‘Gangnam Station 10th Exit’), in: *Munwhawa sahoe* (Korean Journal of Cultural Sociology), 22: 147–186

Lemke, Thomas (2002): “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique”, in: *Rethinking Marxism*, 14.3: 49–64

Lim, In-Sook (2010): “Miyong seonghyeong gongwhaguk-ui gojidoeki anneun wiheom” (Uninformed Dangers in the Republic of Cosmetic Surgery, Korea), in: *Sahoewa yeoksa* (Society and History), 88: 39–78

— (2015): “Oemo chabyeol sahoe-ui oemoburangam-gwa nohwa burangam” (The Appearance Anxiety and Aging Anxiety in an Appearance-Discriminatory Society), in: *Hanguk sahoeak* (Korean Journal of Sociology), 49.4: 199–233

McRobbie, Angela (2008): *The Aftermath of Feminism. Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage

Polanyi, Karl (1944/2001): *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press

Rawls, John (1971): *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Schaap, Andrew (2006): “Agonism in Divided Societies”, in: *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 32.2: 255–277

The Korean Society for Thoracic & Cardiovascular Surgery (2014): *2014 Hyungbu-oegwa baekseo. Seongjang-gwa Jeonmang* (2014 White Paper for the Korean Society for Thoracic & Cardiovascular Surgery). Seoul: The Korean Society for Thoracic & Cardiovascular Surgery

Turner, Stephen P. (1994): *The Social Theory of Practices. Tradition, Tacit Knowledge, and Presuppositions*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Yoon, Hye-Joon (1999): “Hangugin-ui jeonhyeong-euroseo sobija. yeoksa somyo” (Consumer as a Typical Korean: A Historical Sketch), in: *Sahoé bipyeong* (Social Criticism), 22: 182–190

Zerilli, Linda (2005): *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

— (2012): “Value Pluralism and the Problem of Judgment. Farewell to Public Reason”, in: *Political Theory*, 40.1: 6–31

**Appendix:**  
**Basic Demographic Statistics on Women in Korea, 1980–2015**

**Table 1: Total Fertility Rate**

Year	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
	Total Fertility Rate	4.53	3.43	2.82	1.66	1.57	1.63	1.47	1.08	1.23

Source: (Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park. Geon-Pyo 2015: 108)

**Table 2: Women's Status in Education Sector among age 25 or older**

Year	Education				Total
	Elementary	Mid-school	High-school	College	
1980	67.0	16.5	12.9	3.6	100.0
1990	43.0	20.3	28.4	8.3	100.0
2000	30.4	14.3	37.3	18.0	100.0
2010	20.0	13.7	34.2	32.1	100.0

Source: (Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park. Geon-Pyo 2015: 184)

**Table 3: Women's Economic Activity by Educational Level**

Year	Education				(unit: %)
	Mid-school & below	High school	Vocation college	University	
1990	45.6	47.5	66.2	53.1	
2000	43.6	49.4	64.4	57.8	
2010	35.9	52.6	64.9	62.2	
2015	34.0	55.5	67.1	64.4	

Source: (Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park. Geon-Pyo 2015: 233)

**Table 4: Women's Economic Activity by Marital Status and Education**

(unit: %)

Marital Status	Year	Education			
		Mid-school & below	High school	Vocation college	University
Unmarried	1990	15.7	66.1	87.1	78.8
	2000	7.1	54.0	87.0	81.3
	2010	4.5	46.9	87.2	80.5
	2015	3.8	48.3	87.7	81.7
Married	1990	57.3	34.7	44.0	39.6
	2000	57.6	46.7	42.6	46.3
	2010	49.4	53.6	50.2	52.7
	2015	46.9	56.6	53.5	55.8

Source: (Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park, Geon-Pyo 2015: 234-235)

**Table 5: Percentage of Female Non-regular Workers**

(unit: 1,000 Persons, %)

Year	Paid Workers	Regular Workers	Non-regular Workers	Daily Workers
1990	4,190 (100.0)	1,577 (37.6)	1,659 (39.6)	954 (22.7)
2000	5,397 (100.0)	1,679 (31.1)	2,496 (46.2)	1,222 (22.6)
2010	7,230 (100.0)	3,421 (47.3)	2,973 (41.1)	837 (11.6)
2015	8,382 (100.0)	4,731 (56.4)	3,019 (36.0)	686 (8.5)

Source: (Kang, Isoo; Shin, Kyoung-ah; Park, Ginam 2015: 127)

Note:

- 1) Regular Workers: Employee whose term of employment is one year or more
- 2) Non-regular Workers: Employee whose term of employment is one month or more but less than one year.
- 3) Daily workers: Employee whose term of employment is less than one month

**Table 6: Average Daily Time Distribution of Double-income Households**

(unit: hour:minute)

Year	Wife			Husband		
	Paid Work	House Work	Total	Paid Work	House Work	Total
1999	5:54	3:42	9:36	7:19	0:27	7:46
2004	5:14	3:28	8:42	6:34	0:32	7:06
2009	5:06	3:20	8:26	6:20	0:37	6:57
2014	4:52	3:13	8:05	6:11	0:41	6:52

Source: (Kang, Isoo; Shin, Kyoung-ah; Park, Ginam 2015: 383)

**Table 7: Percentage of Never married Population Aged 25 to 44**

(unit: %)

Sex	Year	Age			
		25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
Female	1980	14.1	2.7	1.0	0.5
	1990	22.1	5.3	2.4	1.1
	2000	40.1	10.7	4.3	2.6
	2010	69.3	29.1	12.6	6.2
Male	1980	45.2	7.3	1.8	0.7
	1990	57.3	13.9	3.8	1.5
	2000	71.0	28.1	10.6	4.9
	2010	85.4	50.2	26.7	14.4

Source: (Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park. Geon-Pyo 2015: 107)

**Table 8: Households by Number of Generations**

(unit: %)

Year	One-person Households	Households of Unrelated Persons	Households				Total
			One Generation	Two Generation	Three Generation	Four Generation	
1980	4.8	1.5	8.3	68.5	16.5	0.5	100.0
1990	9.0	1.5	10.7	66.3	12.2	0.3	100.0
2000	15.5	1.1	14.2	60.8	8.2	0.2	100.0
2010	23.9	1.2	17.5	51.3	6.1	0.1	100.0

Source: (Ju, Jae-Seon; Song, Chi-Seong; Park. Geon-Pyo 2015: 124)