

A STUDY ON THE CHANGES IN THE KOREAN FAMILY AND THE ROLE AND STATUS OF FEMALES*

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INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Study

The important changes that have been occurring to the family structure throughout the last 40 years in Korea, such as the increase in the marriage age, decrease in the marriage rate, increase in the divorce rate, decrease in the total birthrate, etc, are phenomena which are hard to capture with the traditional concept of the family. Phenomenal changes like that of the transformation from the patriarchal system of family members into a hierarchical order to a nuclear family, based on married couple, from single income family to a co-working couple family structure, increase in the number of weekend couples and DINK's, etc. are seen in today's family structure in its various forms. These changes, in the concept of a family, are having a dramatic effect on the traditional concept of family values and on the sexual consciousness, which results in the weakening of the solidarity between different generations, the appearance of individualism, the influx of values concerning the equality of sex among family members and etc. thus causing dramatic changes in current family values.

But on the other hand, there have been some indications that the notion of the nuclear family as the only family pattern that can accommodate reasonable desires of family members, lacks universality. Conceptual inclination for the division of public and private domains of males and females, stating males as the instrumental role of the family living and financial matters, and female as the expressive role, is strongly challenged by the increasing numbers of female participation in economic activities and enhancement of female's education level. Active attempts are made to realize, in more reasonable ways and through diverse family patterns, the values such as intimacy and individuality which are esteemed in a nuclear family pattern. Thus in the post-modernist world, it faces a problem of being able to satisfy and comprehend these various family patterns which reflect the diversity of people's lives in our society.

In this study, at a point of evaluating the past century, we analysed the general flow and the meaning of the changes in the family from the aspect of the family structure, functions, and

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relationship of Korean families since 1960, and especially, the main purpose of the study is to examine and look over the changes of the female's role and their status within the family since that time. In this study, we pursued for a proposal scheme for future generations of family relationships based on in-depth examination of the various experiences of the interviewees, and focused on discourse analysis to seek for the fundamental elements in deciding the direction of future policies.

B. Contents and Method of the Study

1. Contents of the Study

First, an intellectual analysis matrix is set up to deal with the changes in the role of female within a family. Second, the changes in the Korean family concerning the approach of the structural aspect. In other words, attempts are made to understand the changes in such changes as the size, form and period of a family. Third, studying the changes from the females' point of view for traditional, modern and post-modernist families, and discuss the family values and motives, in respect to these changes. Fourth, examining previous studies concerning family relations, variety of families, and the role and the status of women. Fifth, the role and the status of female in a variety of families are especially examined, focused on the family relations and changes in the role of women. Sixth, analysing the female role and status in respect to the changes in the functions of the family. Also, we analysed the effects of female employment on family and females, and also on the role and the status of females within the family. The changes in the role of women within a family was analysed in respect to its economical, political and social aspects. Seventh, in an attempt to provide fundamental materials for the establishing of policies for women and family, a forecast was made on the directions of changes of future family structure as well as the role and the status of female, focused on the changes in marital relations and the changing role of females.

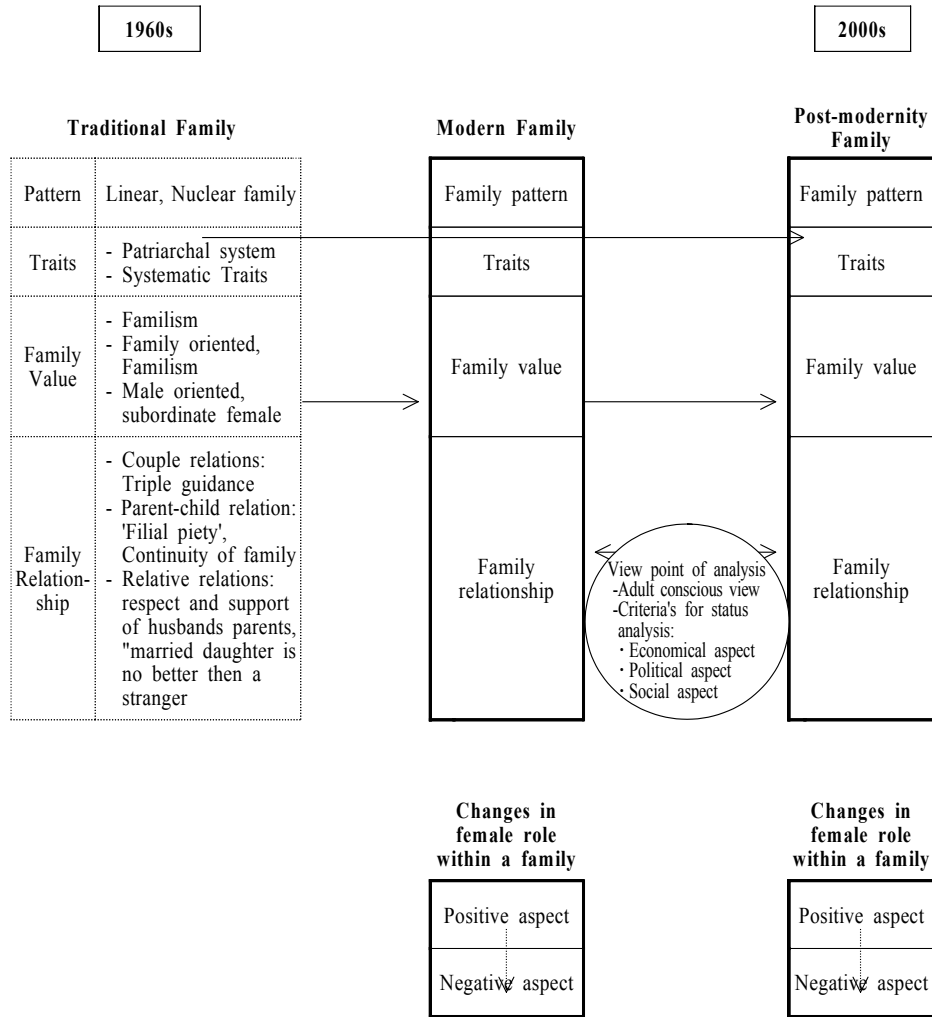
2. Method of Study

First, in the literature study, we re-organized and analysed previous studies concerning the effects of the major events from the 1960s on family structure, family functions, family relations changes in the family values and the role and status of women within a family to understand the characteristics of family changes. Also, statistical data from governmental departments was used as a reference.

Second, we conducted an in-depth interview survey as a survey method, where we used a semi-structured survey questionnaire as a tool for the survey and conducted the survey to a total of 65 females from the age group of 20 to 60, including both females from co-working couples and single working couples in Seoul and Gyeonggi area. Concerning the family pattern of the respondents, the subject for nuclear/linear family was 1 generation of couple family, 2 generations couple families, 3 generations of lineal family (including 3 generations family living with their parents), and an elderly couple family. Concerning the variety families for the interviewer, we conducted a total of 97 interview cases, including 5 couples who were living together, 16 mother and child families, 5 lesbian families, 6 single female families, and etc.

3. Matrix of the Study

The matrix for the study was established and formulated based on the following contents. First, regarding 1960s as the starting point, the preceding period was regarded as a traditional family. Second, the meaning of modern



<Figure 1> Analysis matrix for the study analysis

family was examined from the aspect of family pattern, characteristics, value, and relations. Third, the meaning of post-modern family was examined from the aspect of family pattern, characteristics, values and relations. Fourth, when analysing the changes of female's role within a family, we separated the understanding of the positive and the negative aspects. Fifth, we tried to understand the changes in the motives from the aspect of the increase of female's participation in economic activities, changes in female related regulations and systems, changes in social economics and changes in family values.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

From the women's point of view, there has been some fundamental changes in the life of women due to the various phenomena of modern society, including industrialization, urbanization, emergence of nuclear families, new form of time-space regulations, development of mass media, and etc. At the same time, women had to experience various, but reiterating identity and changes like becoming consumers, mothers, laborers, artists, sweethearts, behaviorists, self individuals etc. due to class, human and sexual hierarchy. Therefore, if a female author writes a history on females, we will be able to understand a new series of development and process concerning the meaning and essence of the process of our history.

The territorial division of men and women at workplace and home, is a result of industrialization. When discussing modernity and sex differences, the propensity required at the workplace is normally masculine and the propensity required at home is normally feminine. In other words, phenomenon like industrialization, emergence of consumption, modern cities, mass media, technology etc. are considered fundamentally masculine while feminine values like that of "intimacy" and "pacification" are frequently indicated by dominant feminism idealists as being existing outside the logics of modernism.

The effect of post modernism on family is a gender regulation based on rationality, under the typical ideology of the nuclear family. Its main purpose is to raise fundamental problems of the presumption "males maintaining the living for the family." (Thorne & Yalom, 1982). In other words, the typical changes which post modernism brought about on families were to derivate new family values of various families from the traditional nuclear family regulations and this emphasizes the diversity of results and the recognition of differences. Gender, a post modern female rights activists and whom carried out strict investigation on the concept of patriarchal system, believed that it was socially constructed differently. Therefore, its theory starts off by stating that not only females but also males are victims of social pressure. The main purpose of feminists' analysis of post modernism is to clarify that there is no single family experience for women. This is aimed to disintegrate the logics and practice of maintaining and legalizing male dominant systems and to challenge the traditional concept of ignoring the differences in the elements of age, race, class or even sexual orientation of sexual interests. Therefore, the purpose of feminist approach to family is to reflect the discrepancy of women's family life and to control gender related visions. In other words, it wants to re-establish the traditionally recognised household affairs, passive understanding of family name, re-production rights, payment of labor

and the correction of authority, as well as establishing an integrated social system to resolve the tensions formulated between the dedication to oneself and to others (Baber & Allen, 1992).

So far, Korean society has regarded diverse forms of families formed by other than legitimate marriage as abnormal. For the reason, except for one parent families, which are regarded as the subject of social welfare, scholarly interest for other forms of family patterns has not been able to develop from that of relying on foreign studies and research. In addition, we are not able to conduct any statistical survey due to the silence of the victims, who want to be exempt from the contemptuous visions of society. We need to conduct a study showing how and through what process these people, who live a counterproposal lifestyle, actualize these problems to become a personal decision problem, and find out what they are planning through this, and also understand the consequences which our society has to undertake, as a responsibility for this process.

SURVEY RESULTS (NUCLEAR/LINEAL FAMILY, SUBSTITUTIONAL FAMILY)

A. Family Pattern and its Relations with the Wife

In this study, we examined the changes of husband and wife relationships from the aspect of communication, reasons and solutions for conjugal conflicts, decision making, division of household labor, co-expectancy between couples, co-adaptation and satisfaction, and sex, love and debauchery between couples.

When generalizing the survey results and classifying the results based on the impartiality of husband and wife relationships on equality of communication, level of reflection of wives opinion in decision making and the efficiency of dividing household labor, the resulting patterns are as follows :

First, the male predominant pattern. This is a pattern where husbands' decision making power is dominant, husbands disrespect their wives, males don't participate in household labor, and the female has no contribution rights in decision making. Second, wife orientated pattern: a pattern where wives' decision making power is strong, wives disrespect their husbands, and a majority of household labor is centered to be the husbands responsibility. Third, companionship relation: where both the husband and wife have consideration to each other for the respected 3 criteria's (decision making, distribution of household labor, and communication), and both parties participate tremendously in the exercise of household labor. Fourth, co-noninterference pattern. You can say this is an autonomic pattern, where both parties exercise their individual responsibilities but there is no element of fraternity in this pattern.

- Male predominant pattern

This pattern is mostly noticeable among elderly people, where husbands' character and life pattern are male-orientated and conducts strong authority to females. In this pattern, problem revolvment between husband and wife is mainly conducted and determined by the husband and husband's attitude towards his wife, which is normally commanding and dominating. This is a

traditional reflection of feudal society, where all the authority is concentrated around the husband, and the wife and children are mere subordinates. Therefore, the husband's authority and dominance permeate the economical life of production and consumption, thus also affecting the family's social life.

My husband is a person who does what he wants. He never considers my opinion and feelings. I live according to my husband's commands. Every night, I feel like taking a piece of my grief in my heart and threading it, because there is no other way of resolving this grief. I always feel that I tell myself to take revenge on my husband but, whenever I make a decision, I always depend on my husband and his opinion is always reflected. Our sex life? We haven't had sex, after our first baby. But, it seems sometimes, he has sex with other girls outside (63 years old, co-working, Case 601).

- Wife orientated pattern

This pattern is opposite to that of the male predominant pattern, where the wife has dominance in normal family conversations, and the wife's opinion has a stronger influence on family matters. This is a pattern where the husband acts in reference to the wife's opinion or acts cooperatively. The wife's opinion is dominantly reflected in all respects and concern for the wife, and the husband conducts majority of the household labor in respect of helping the wife. The wife conducts neither authority nor power against the husband. It is just that the wife has the majority of the leadership and initiatives. But this doesn't mean that the wife has the financial rights. This is a pattern which is normally regarded as "wife who expresses her opinion" among the old peoples. This pattern was highly noticeable among the couples in the 20's and the 50's

My husband always listens to and respects my opinions. He also understands me when I am stressed out. I have nothing that I can't tell my husband. He always listens to whatever I tell him. He doesn't remember and celebrate our wedding anniversary or my birthday. I always tell him in advance and we celebrate accordingly. Although we discuss whenever we have to make a decision, my opinion always rules over my husband's. My husband has the responsibility of buying food materials, as a part of his household labor (51 years old, single working couple, case 511).

- Fraternity distribution pattern

The couple normally co-decide when making a decision, conduct democratic and friendly conversations, and proportionally distribute household labor. Both husband and wife have impartial relationships, and conduct cooperative division of labor. Characteristics of this pattern is that the rights, responsibility, and the obligation are equally distributed, and the husband and wife relation is closely bonded with open discussion, co-respect, and fraternity. Also, the household labor, childcare, and decision making are equally distributed among the husband and wife.

In reference to female employment, this pattern of husband and wife relations was more noticeable in co-working families, rather than in single working couple families, and it was noticed that this pattern was more noticeable in low income families with high level of education.

- Co-noninterference pattern

In this pattern, the husband and wife determine the responsibility for each person and each individual makes decision and acts freely within the reign of their responsibilities, without any

interference from their partners. In other words, there is a field where the husband solemnly decides and acts freely, and there is also another area where the wife does the same.

We have no concern for each other in times of trouble. When we have discord in our opinions, I consider and weigh my husband's opinion but normally I resolve it as I wish. Although we have a lot of differences in our character, we give up the process of harmonizing these differences and we only interfere and discuss problems with each other within the area of common concern. When making a decision, I only consult my husband when it's something that has a great importance to the family, and make my own decisions for everything else. When my husband comes in late, I'm sometimes dubious that my husband had relations with some other girls (45 years old, Co-working, case 404).

B. Female Employment and Role Change

Social activities of married females are not solemnly conducted through personal intentions but depend heavily on the economical status of the family and family relations, multiple variations of the shape of employment exists including female resigning from work or starting work etc. in coherence to the time of marriage and delivery.

First, in the 60's age group, the majority of the husband's attitude towards female employment was negative. We can presume this from the statements that says "a female who had dreams of becoming a professional worker had to become a simple housewife after her marriage" and the situations where I don't specially know what I want to do" or from the stories where females told us that they were involved in social occupation, without their husbands knowing it. In reality, most of the males believe that they cannot understand the logical reasoning behind female employment because they have worked and earned the living for the family. They also resent such facts because it is believed that female employment was a sign of poverty, back in the past. But on the other hand, in case of couples who were enrolled in co-employment in private owned business, female employment received support from the family because it was considered as being supportive to the husband's work, but this support was not expanded to the division of household labor.

In the 40's ~ 50's age group, we could find some difference in the conscious among the family members concerning female employment. The majority of the males agreed that his wife's employment helps in increasing the economical development of the family. But this conscious wasn't directly expanded to the fact that they were in direct support for female employment. From the husbands' tendency of choosing "although it may help the economic status of the family, I still wouldn't actively induce it" or "I prefer her to take good care of the children and my parents" clearly reflects the husbands' preferences. But the female respondents in this age group believed that they were seeking employment not just to aid the family's economical life but to pursue higher goals for themselves. It was expressed that females who had to stop work after marriage and transform into a housewife show remorse that "if they returned to society, her daily life would not be so repetitious" and the statements concerning the satisfaction with work and being inconvenienced by not having a job clearly reflects that the reason for female employment was not simply to aid the family but to advance one step further of one's self-expectations and anticipations.

On the other hand, in the 20's ~ 30's age group, a dramatic difference in the husband's attitude was discovered. Although not every male in this age group overcame the traditional patriarchal consciousness and the conservative attitudes, the majority of them either gave the deciding rights to the female counterpart or gave them active support for female employment. Several cases were noticed where the husband, who was in full support of female employment exercised co-working marriage life and his mother provided support and help for the household labor, and also, a lot of co-working couples were noticed in this age group, where the husband participated in and divided the household labor with his wife, which showed us that these tendencies were frequently exercised and practiced among the married couples in this age group. In regards to the female attitudes toward female employment, we were able to find out that for unemployed females in this age group, they were either looking for a job because they felt like they were becoming negligent to themselves at home but had no success or they were remorseful to the fact they believed that they could of had a lot of social experience, but then got married without experiencing any work in society. But on the other hand, the female respondents from a co-employment married couples, believed that it not only gives economical independence and aid to the family economic situation but also gives them self-confidence and is a good opportunity for self discipline. Thus we can say that marriage itself, at least from the conscious aspect, was not recognized as an obstacle factor for female employment.

CONCLUSION

Due to the increasing trend of married females participation in society and the increases in the time spent outside the house, husbands attitudes towards female employment are becoming positive. Therefore, the division of public and private sectors between male and female is becoming integrated. Employed females can experience changed futures and lifestyles through the alleviation of duplicate roles at home and increasing participation of husbands in household labor. But, if we examine the effects of married females employment on her role and status within the family, there was no meaningful difference in the aspect of access to the ownership resources of the families' economical rights. Also, no correlation was detected in the relationship of authority between the couples. Therefore, now is the time for change in the regulations determining husband and wife relationships through the integration of the separated public and private sectors of male and female relations and overcoming the traditional separation of the role of male and females. The regulations concerning these changes should be promoted in the direction of pursuing "dichotomy division of male and female on variety and difference" and "adding to the justification of care."

Second, considering the background for the emergence of various types of family patterns, it is the result of the emergence of importance on personal values, rather than values of the family as a whole which is the transformation of family values. In the traditional concept of family values, the reputation of the family was recognized as the most important value, but within the modern family, the quality of personal life has started to emerge as the most concerning and valuable aspect. In other words, due to the enfeeblements of the traditional family values and concepts, individualistic ways of thinking, which emphasizes the importance of personal rights and self-importance, started to emerge, and if one couldn't satisfy these changes, consequently the rate of divorce increased and resulted in the social tendency of not having a baby after marriage. Variety of family life could be said as a result of personal choices but, on the other hand, it can be said as a result of the unique characteristics of the structure of the society. Therefore, we should escape from the traditional conception of regarding them as immoral, but stand on a positive situation and should provide political considerations for them to conduct an intact social life. Thus, we have to make new social regulations that coincide with the characteristics of the Korean society to enable the practice of diverse and various types of family life. For this to be successfully conducted, gender equality must be practiced in our society, variation and differentiations hasn't be understood, and both traditional and modern concept of values must be respected, which sometimes are mixed and seem to have no correlation.

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