

**Labour and Economic Crisis:
Women's experiences of employment
in South Korea after 1997**

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10 December, 2004

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
The Australian National University**

Statement of Originality

*This thesis is my original work
except where cited*

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10 December 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KHM', written in a cursive style.

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been an enormously challenging and rewarding journey for me. I am pleased to have finished this project in due time, but I am also mindful of the huge debt that I owe to many people who gave freely of their time, expertise and friendship in the course of my PhD.

My lifelong gratitude goes to Professor Christine Sylvester, who has been a great teacher and mentor. During her research trip to Pusan in 1997, Christine found me, then a novice Master student at the Pusan National University. It was there that she suggested that I pursue a PhD under her supervision at the Australian National University. If it was not for this encounter, I would have not been who I am today and this thesis would have not been written. Her capacity for critical and thorough thinking has been exemplary, as has her inspiring supervision. I am most thankful for her continual encouragement for me to take on the challenge of this interdisciplinary research project; and for her great enthusiasm and support throughout the duration of my PhD.

I am also deeply indebted to Doctor Sharon Bessell, who has served as my committee chair in the last stage of writing this thesis. Her thorough comments, guidance, and encouragements were invaluable in the completion of this thesis. In addition, I wish to thank Professor Ken Wells and Doctor Jong-Soon Kang – also members of my supervisory panel. Ken Wells has been an inspiring advisor, from whose profound knowledge in the area of Korean history I benefited greatly. In addition, Jong-Soon Kang generously shared his expertise

on Korean economic development, and in particular statistical data analysis. He has provided me with continual advice and support from the start of my research up to the end. All of my panel were helpful and friendly, but balanced this with trenchant criticism when needed.

Special thanks to Doctor Tae-Hong Kim, a senior researcher at the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) for reading the draft of this thesis and providing me with expert advice, particularly on my employment data and interview analyses. I have been very fortunate to have had many discussions with him in relation to the Korean labour market and women's employment issues during his one-year visit in Canberra in 2004. I am also thankful to Doctor Ruth Barraclough, who has been an inspiring colleague and a supportive friend all the way. Her continual encouragements and helpful critical comments on each chapter of the thesis were invaluable.

The fieldwork I conducted in Seoul, Korea over a period of three months in 2001 constitutes the important phase of my PhD project. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to all my survey respondents and interviewees, who gave me time and shared information of their personal experiences of employment. I would like to specially thank those individuals who helped me with arranging surveys and interviews with their colleagues at banks and the apparel industry: Jun Myeong-Hwan, Kang Sam-Seok, Lee Yun-Kyeong, Moon Seung-Taek, and Kim Jae-Hwan from banks; Nam Byeong-Joon, Lee Geun-Goo, Jo Yeoung-Mi, Kang Sang-Mi, and Lee Eun-Joo from the apparel industry. I also thank Kwun Hye-Ja, a researcher at the Federation of Korean Trade Union (FKTU), for providing me with a very useful document, *Women's Labour in the*

Banking Industry (2000) that was extremely useful for the employment data analysis of the banking sector in this thesis.

I also would like to thank the Asian Center for Women's Studies (ACWS) at Ewha Womans University in Seoul to be my institutional sponsor during my field research period in Seoul. The support and warm hospitality from Chang Pil-Wha, then a director of ACWS and the staff, Yoo Seong-Hye, Kang Sun-Mi, Han Seung-Hee, Choi Sun-Ae, and Kamal Gehi inspired me to greater efforts and added to my peace of mind while there.

My time at the Asian Pacific School of Economics and Government (APSEG) at the Australian National University (ANU) has been the most intellectually stimulating time of my academic career. Both the ANU and APSEG gave me generous tuition and stipend scholarships, for which I am most grateful. In addition, I would like to thank APSEG for providing me with fieldwork grants and travel funds for attending national and international conferences. For the administrative and academic skills support, I would like to thank Maurette Macleod and Alison Cumming Thom respectively. For her proofreading, special thanks are due Colleen Chaston. Without her generosity, and enthusiasm, this work has not been brought to completion.

Special thanks also go to Doctor Rosanne Kennedy, who gave me an opportunity to teach a course (Gender, Globalisation and Development) at Gender, Sexuality and Culture (GSC) department at ANU during the second semester in 2004. Teaching this course was tremendously rewarding at the end stage of my PhD, especially because it helped me realise the practical use of the knowledge and

expertise that I attained in the course of my PhD study. I am also grateful for wonderful colleagues I met at the GSC department: Lucy Tatman, Motoe Sasaki-Gayle Hiroko Matsuda, and Helen Keane. Thanks to their support and warm friendship, I was able to complete teaching successfully while still working on this thesis.

I would like to record my great debts of gratitude to my friends at ANU: Tao Sherry Kong, Reiko Okumura-Rougeaux, Tanira Kingi, Denise Kingi, Park Youn-Min, Jun Eun-Suk, Amy Chan, Yae Sano, Lorraine Salazar, Francis Hutchinson, Haruo Nakagawa, Tien Luu, Christian Von Luebke, Torsten Jülich, Elly Tchoubrieva, Jeffrey Choi, Kim Hyung-Joo and Patrick Kilby for their invaluable friendship and encouragement, but especially for always reminding me that there is a world outside my PhD office. Discussions, travels, movies, parties, and sports that I had with them made my PhD life fun, pleasant, and meaningful. In particular, I am most grateful to Sherry, Reiko, Amy, and Tanira for their never-ending support for me. They were always out there for me to share not only my achievement but also discouraging moments I had in the course of my PhD. I also thank the Vertessy family (Deborah, Rob, Luka and Zoe) for being my family in Canberra. I am Luka and Zoe's adopted aunt. I am truly grateful to Deb and Rob for helping me feeling home in Canberra.

Finally, but most important, I express my deepest appreciation to my parents as well as my sisters and brothers in Korea. It has been comforting to know that they have been behind me through all the years in whatever I have pursued. Their love, support and trust in me could not be more appreciated, and it is to them that I dedicate this thesis.

Abbreviations

EEA	Equal Employment Act
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
FKTU	Federation of Korean Trade Union
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
HMC	Hyundai Motor Company
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KAIA	Korean Apparel Industry Association
KDI	Korean Development Institute
KFFLU	Korean Federation of Financial Labour Unions
KIPI	Korean Institute of Poverty Issues
KOFOTI	Korean Federation of Textile Industries
KOFTTU	Korean Federation of Textile Trade Union
KTUC	Korea Trade Union Congress
KWDI	Korean Women's Development Institute
KWTU	Korean Women's Trade Union
KWWAU	Korean Women Workers Association United
LARNET	Labour Reporters' Network
MOGE	Ministry of Gender Equality
MOLAB	Ministry of Labour
MOE	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
NSO	Korea National Statistical Office
OECD	The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SWTU	Seoul Women's Trade Union

Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of economic crisis and structural adjustment on women's employment in post 1997 South Korea. Its main argument is that gender discriminatory employment practices in South Korean firms increased during the 1997 financial crisis-affected period, and women were laid off and represented among non-regular workers at higher rates than were men. This thesis emphasises economic and gender analysis, and suggests that the gender discrimination against women in the post crisis Korean labour market is caused not only by changes in economic conditions and neo-liberal employment adjustment but is also mediated by the practice of patriarchy and its bias prevailing in the society.

The central research questions of this thesis are as follows. In the 1997 crisis-affected period: 1) how were women's employment experiences different from men?, 2) how did individual workers themselves analyse employment changes in their workplace?, and 3) what factors account for gender-differentiated employment changes? The major analysis of this research is based on employment data covering workforce participation, unemployment, workers' industrial and occupational distribution, and employment status which together demonstrates the gendered process of employment transformation during the post 1997 period (1998 recession and 1999 recovery). Moreover, using three case studies, covering the commercial banking industry, the apparel industry, and Hyundai Motor Company (HMC), this research finds the prevalence of gender discriminatory employment practices in the workplace, largely through exclusion of female workers from regular (full-time

permanent) jobs during the post crisis employment adjustment period. The empirical inquiries of the banking industry are based on fieldwork (questionnaire survey and personal interviews) in Korea in 2001. This study on gender discrimination in employment after 1997 is important because this period has seen a further marginalisation of female workers in the Korean labour market.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis argues that gender discriminatory employment practices in South Korean (henceforth Korean) firms increased during the 1997 financial crisis-affected period. In particular, in 1998, women were laid off and represented among non-regular workers at higher rates than were men. The thesis emphasizes economic and gender analysis, and suggests that the gender discrimination against women in the post crisis Korean labour market is caused not only by changes in economic conditions and neo-liberal employment adjustment but is also mediated by the practice of patriarchy and its bias prevailing in the society. One of the significant impacts of the 1997 economic crisis has been a deepening of the dichotomy of male and female roles in the Korean labour market. Following the crisis, the country's economy as a whole significantly contracted, resulting in shutdown, merger, acquisition, and downsizing of many businesses. Rigorous labour market reform took place, led by the Korean government. This legally codified existing neo-liberal labour arrangements, which lacked consideration for fair employment policies.

Dismissal of redundant workforce, wage cutbacks, and replacement of full-time permanent with part-time, time-limited, and out-sourced workers were common ways for firms to restructure employment in pursuit of labour cost reduction. In the face of the unprecedented financial crisis, the notion of the male worker as family breadwinner and primary worker in the society became more dominant. This

affected labour market actors including employers and labour unions, when decisions on who would remain in the workplace had to be made. In addition, the existing gender division of labour in paid work - mostly women in less prestigious, less well paid, and less skilled jobs - made female workers more vulnerable to severe employment changes as such jobs were usually the first to disappear during the recession period. Hence, in many cases men were given priority in employment in the process of the post 1997 employment restructuring (Cho 2000a, 2000b:302; Park 1998; Shin 2001; Shin 2002:28-9; Song 1999).

This study of gender discrimination in employment after 1997 is important because this period has seen a further marginalisation of female workers in the Korean labour market (Kang and Shin 2001: 231-2; Kim 2001; Kim 2003a). In particular, the perception of women as more flexible workers, who cost less and are more adaptive and responsive to changes in uncertain economic conditions, has been more widely accepted since 1997 and has served to reduce women's access to full-time permanent occupations. As a consequence, females are over-represented among the non-regular workforce, suffering from more frequent job turnover and restricted employment benefits and rights, although holding work responsibilities equivalent to full-time employment. In the year 2002, for instance, in terms of the importance of the non-regular workers in the total workforce, less than half of male workers but nearly three-quarters of female workers were non-regular workers (Kim 2003a; NSO 2003). However, the average wage of non-regular workers in the same year was only 53 per cent of that for full-time permanent workers. Moreover, the wage per hour for non-regular female

workers was, on average, only 39 per cent of that for regular male workers (Kim 2003a).

To make the situation worse, in addition to the government and employers, the trade unions, including both nationwide and individual enterprise-based unions, tended to take gender-differentiated employment changes for granted. Indeed, these discriminatory employment practices against women continue to occur despite improvements in the country's economic condition. According to the Ministry of Labour (MOLAB) in 2003, the number of firms, which were reported for gender-discrimination employment practices in 2002 - including unfair job advertisements, disproportionate dismissal of women workers and sexual harassment - was found to be the highest since 1998 (*Yunhapnews*, 03 September 2003).

My analysis is based on employment data covering workforce participation, unemployment, workers' industrial and occupational distribution, and employment status which together demonstrate the gendered process of employment transformation during the post 1997 period (1998 recession and 1999 recovery). Moreover, using three case studies, covering the commercial banking industry, the apparel industry, and Hyundai Motor Company (henceforth HMC), I find that some firms reintroduced gender discriminatory employment practices in the post crisis employment adjustment process. Importantly, these case studies, comprising questionnaire surveys and personal interviews with workers in Korean banks and apparel factories in 2001, inform us about workers' employment experience after the crisis and their analyses of gender discrimination in their working lives¹. Based on these case studies, this thesis

identifies differences in patterns of employment changes in three separate industries; white-collar banking, male-concentrated car manufacturing, and female-concentrated apparel.

This study demonstrates that the increasing trends toward a fragmentation of employment structure and flexibilisation of the workforce in Korea have had a greater impact on marginal forms of labour, specifically performed by women². It complements the burgeoning literature on the impact of neo-liberal employment adjustment in crisis-affected countries by considering efficiency-driven neo-liberal labour operation as furthering marginalisation of women's employment in a transitional economy (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2000; Beneria 2001; Beneria and Feldman 1992; Baden 1993; Chant 1996; Cho 2000b; Chung 2001; Cornia et al. 1987; Elson 1994; Judisman and Moreno 1990; Kim 2001; Park 1998; Riphenburg 1996; Shin 2001). The neo-liberal labour principles based on easier utilisation of workforce in response to uncertain market demands results in a fragmentation of workers between regular (primary or core) and more flexible non-regular (secondary, periphery, outsourced, or subcontracted). This thesis also complements feminist studies of Korean women's work in the historical context. Particularly, it explores gender hierarchy in Korean work as a product of the interconnectedness between the country's long-established patriarchy and the new material order of global capitalism, which makes women's labour more flexible, less costly, and more adaptive to uncertain economic conditions (Chang 1997; Cho 1998, 2000b; Kim, S. K. 1997; Kim, H. M. 1999 ; Lee, H. J. 1996a). This study focuses on the roles played by the Korean developmentalist state in shaping and sustaining the patriarchal division of gender roles and labour through socialisation institutions,

including family, work, education, and legal institutions (Cho Han 1995, 1998; Kim, H. M. 1999, Moon 2002a, 2002b, Park 1993, 1995). In so doing, it contributes both to general understandings of gender, family and work, (Becker, 1957, 1993, Blau and Ferber 1992; Hartman; 1979; Mies 1986; Mincer 1961; Sokoloff 1980; Walby 1990) and to an understanding of Korea's gendered processes of social transformation in the name of national economic development. Finally, this study contributes to the literature on Korean women's real employment experiences in individual industries including occupational segregation and exclusion from a decision-making process and union representation in the workplaces (Cho 1987; Kang and Lee 2001; Kim, S. K. 1997; Alternative Culture 1999; Son et al. 1999)

1.2 Issues of the study

1.2.1 Korea's labour market restructuring based on the neo-liberal labour operation in post 1997

The neo-liberal labour approach aims to utilise a workforce more easily in response to uncertain market demands, primarily through dismissal of redundant workforce, wage moderation, and cutting-down of working hours in pursuit of lean and efficient labour management (Beneria, 2001; Campbell and Burgess, 2001; Standing et al., 1996: 6-8). In addition, this approach intensifies the use of non-regular (atypical or non-standard) workers, who provide a more flexible form of labour as they are employed on a part-time, short-term fixed, seasonal, or daily basis. These workers are less costly, are more adaptive and responsive to changes in uncertain economic

conditions, and cause fewer labour disputes, as they cannot enjoy the comprehensive employment benefits and rights that are given to regular workers. Therefore, the de-regularisation of workers intensifies the division of a workforce between primary and secondary workers and causes a serious decline in employment stability and security. Finally, the flexible labour operation causes frequent job turnover, unemployment, and underemployment.

Korea's attempt to adapt to the neo-liberal labour approach began from the early 1990s when the country faced increased foreign pressure for market liberalisation and the pressure of increasing inflation and wage costs in the domestic market. Korea paid more attention to the flexibility-driven labour policies from the mid 1990s as a part of the country's globalisation strategies. The Kim Yung-Sam government had the neo-liberal labour arrangements legislated at the end of 1996, shortly after becoming a member of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). However, Korean workers, who were accustomed to life-long employment, high commitment to the firm and a seniority-based wage system, strenuously opposed the labour approach (Koo 2000; Lee, J. S. 2002:83-5; Song 1999). As a result, workers' rigorous opposition was represented through large-scale labour strikes, and finally in 1997 a general strike was called by two nationwide organised labour unions, the Federation of Korean Trade Union (FKTU) and the Korea Trade Union Congress (KTUC). However, the outbreak of the 1997 crisis changed the labour market situation completely, resulting in weakening of the workers' resistance to the State-led neo-liberal labour reform during the crisis-affected period (Lee, J. S. 2002:80-6; Song 1999).

After the crisis, the Korean government had to pursue fundamental economic and labour reform based upon the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) offered to the country with a rescue package to offset the sudden deficiency of foreign reserve by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Of the conditionalities for the SAPs, the provision of labour market flexibility became a critical issue for the Korean government because rigid labour market conditions were thought to hinder an increase in foreign equity investment and a large-scale corporate restructuring in the country. In February 1998, the Kim Dae-Jung government achieved a successful agreement between labour and business on legalisation of flexible dismissal of redundant regular workforce and of hiring substitute workers. The implementation of these laws in practice had immediate impacts on the labour market, represented as a significant increase in unemployment and an expansion of the size of non-regular workforce. Nonetheless, the flexibility-driven employment adjustment was carried out, lacking consideration for equal employment policies and legal actions to prevent discriminatory employment practices against a marginal form of labour, specifically women.

1.2.2 Gender impacts of the post crisis employment adjustment in Korea

How individual workers are affected by crisis and structural adjustment programs varies for many reasons, embracing differences in skill levels, nature of jobs, and group biases in employment. According to empirical studies documenting ways in which hardship of adjustment was distributed in other countries, gender identity is presented as one of the important factors causing unequal

distribution among workers (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2000; Cornia et al. 1987; Rippenburg 1996). The Korean case is not much different. Marginal forms of labour, specifically that performed by women, were affected more by a fragmentation of employment structure and flexibilisation of the workforce than was the regular labour of men during the 1998 crisis-affected period. Working women appear to be the first target of dismissals and to have more difficulty in re-entering the labour market. As a result, gender-differentiated employment practices in workplaces occurred more frequently. The most common ways that women were able to survive in employment was through wage reductions and de-regularisation of their employment status.

The immediate impact of the 1997 crisis on employment by gender can be seen in the analysis of the aggregate employment data from 1998³. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) (2002), during the year of 1998, as many as 329,000 women (equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the 1997 female workforce) left the workforce; this was greater than the 121,000 men (or 0.4 per cent of the 1997 male workforce) who left. Other observers of employment practices, including Ji-Yeon Chang (2001), Tae-Hong Kim (2000), and Jae-Ho Keum (2002) have said that this situation occurred because unemployed women, who found more difficulties in finding a new job at that time, gave up job seeking activities, and in the end removed themselves from the workforce. The NSO analysis also demonstrates women's greater job losses in almost all industries. During the year of 1998, as many as 329,000 women (equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the 1997 female workforce) left the workforce; this was greater than the 121,000 men or 0.4 per cent of the 1997 male workforce who left.

The changes in nature and pattern of employment by gender varied in terms of industry, occupation, workers' skill levels, their employment status, and the time differences during the crisis-affected period in Korea (MOLAB 2003; NSO 2003). For instance, amongst the workers who lost their job due to forceful dismissal or involuntary retirement in 1998, those in the manufacturing sector accounted for the largest proportion, making up 47 per cent (15.7 and 12.1 per cent of females and males respectively) (Cho 1999). In addition, within the manufacturing sector, female workers in the male-concentrated industries were more likely to be dismissed forcefully or involuntarily than were women workers in female-concentrated industries in the same year. Meanwhile, in terms of the gender ratio of these unemployed workers among the total unemployed in each industry in 1998, that for the financial sector, including the industries of banking and insurance, was the most asymmetric, showing 20.9 and 13.5 per cent of females and males respectively (Cho 1999). Looking at the gender ratio by occupation, the forceful dismissal and involuntary retirement by employers' request occurred in white-collar occupations more intensively than in any other occupation (Cho 1999; Koo 2000). Therefore, it is appropriate to examine the changes in nature and pattern of employment by gender after the crisis in terms of various employment spectrums.

1.2.3 What causes gender differentials in work?

In general, women's labour tends to be identified differently from men's in a capitalist labour market in terms of nature and value of their labour. Differences in monetary values of their labour and

occupational distribution, largely represented as women crowded in less-paying and less-important jobs, are significant outcomes of the hierarchical relationship between men and women in society. In explaining gender differences in paid work, this thesis examines two approaches, depending on whether these differences are considered to be rational or non-rational oriented. The rational market approach, called the human capital theory, is promoted by the neo-classical economists. In this theory women take up an inferior status in paid work due to the characteristics of their human capital, specifically regarded as being less productive and less beneficial than is men's to employers and industrial families with the profit-maximising tendency (Becker 1957, 1964; ILO 1997; Mincer 1962, 1993; Reskin 1993). According to the theory, men usually have more opportunities to accumulate their human capital and have lifetime economic participation without any career interruption by their family commitments.

However, two non-rational market approaches emerged as criticisms of human capital theory. The first non-rational market approach was proposed by other economists. They argue that gender differences in the labour market are mainly created by labour market actors' (including employers, government, individuals) or labour institution's discrimination against women. This labour market discrimination approach involves three different theories: tastes for discrimination theory, statistical discrimination theory, and dual labour market theory (Anker 1998; Arrow 1971; Becker 1957, 1965, 1985, 1993; Doeringer and Piore 1971; Phelps 1972; Sattinger 1998; Thurow 1975; Wotton 1997). Overall, according to these discrimination theories, the labour market has a dual primary and secondary employment structure. In this market, women are less

attracted to the primary market largely due to employers' male preference or perception of women as workers who have a relatively poorer job performance than do men. These economic theories make a contribution in acknowledging that non-rational market or imperfect market operation by individuals or labour market causes gender inequality in employment. However, in the same way as human capital theorists, the discrimination theorists also take gender hierarchy in both households and paid work for granted and thereby do not include profound gender analysis in their studies.

The second non-rational market approach is based on gender-related explanations and is presented in order to explore the ideological and historical origins of gender differences, filling the gaps in the economic-oriented discrimination theories. Different groups of feminist theories, the early Marxist feminist theories (also called 'Marxist feminist theories of the home') (Costa 1972; James 1972; Mitchell 1972; Humphries 1977; Gardiner 1979; Gimenez 1997) and the later Marxist feminist theories (also called 'Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy') (Eisenstein 1979, 1981; Hartmann 1976, 1979; Jaggar 1983; and Mies 1986) have informed the formation of asymmetric gender relationships in both home and production. The early Marxist feminist theories propose a separate concept of capitalism and patriarchy, whereas the later Marxist feminist theories uphold an interaction between capitalism and patriarchy as a cause of gender difference in the labour market. The relationship between the two ideologies can be identified differently in terms of how they articulate women's disadvantaged position in the labour market. Nonetheless, these groups of feminist scholars agree on the interconnected relationship of gender division of labour between

household and paid work, which is critical to understanding women's underprivileged employment status⁴.

The two interacting systems, patriarchy and capitalistic mode of production are seen to produce systemic male dominance or bias in labour market. In this thesis, patriarchy is defined as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women'⁵ (Walby 1990:20). This definition was proposed by Sylvia Walby and she used the term social structure because 'it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every women in a subordinate one'⁶ (1990:20). The two systems of patriarchy and capitalism can be underpinned by political, economic, racial and cultural systems that also privilege men in terms of power and value and they can take different forms in different historical periods (Cunnison and Stageman 1993:4; Lim 1990:105; Walby 1990). In addition, some argue that a global flexible system of production also shapes and reinforces asymmetric gender relations in paid work (Elson and Pearson 1988:229; Mies 1986). Significantly, family and education institutions with patriarchal tendencies reinforce gender biases and perpetuate the notion of inequality between men and women in the primary process of socialisation (Lim 1990; Park 1993). Moreover, the state is seen as an important agent that upholds patriarchy in institutions through laws, regulations, policies and ideological pronouncements privileging men in both private and public spheres (Sassoon 1986; Walby 1990). Therefore, the systemic male dominance in the labour market is in line with the ruling ideologies and institutions in a society that produces gender discrimination through exclusion and segregation, making it difficult

for women to obtain jobs, positions, monetary compensation, and organisational power as equally as men.

Rigid gender discrimination has always existed in the Korean labour market. Although the number of women in paid work has steadily increased because of the labour demand of the country's economy, their workforce participation is not considered as significant as that of men. As a result, women are usually regarded as a low-waged flexible labour resource, which is easy to be brought in and out of the labour market in response to labour demand (Bary 1998; Kong 1997). Male dominance in employment has been underlined in association with the neo-Confucian gender ideology prevailing in the entire society as a common gender norm. The ideology defines particular gender roles and relations by restricting women's life sphere to inside the house, and by asserting women's subordination to the male heads of the family, including their father, husband, and son throughout their entire life. This dichotomy of gender relations has persisted in Korean society across time. In accordance with the material changes taking place in society, woman's role as a (potential) housewife who is responsible for reproducing and maintaining the producers in households or the internal world of the material world has been stressed⁷. Such gender politics has been common in other post colonial societies such as India⁸. As a result, gender hierarchy has reproduced itself on the basis of the modern notion of producer-husband and dependent housewife, contributing to the maintenance of a stable and harmonious social order, in which each man and woman knew his/her appropriate place.

Meanwhile, Korean society has been based on the two national hegemonic principles, pro-industrialisation (or pro-economic

growth) since its end of Japanese colonialism in 1945 and postwar nation building. These two national principles have had an important impact on the shaping of gender hierarchy based on gendered nationalism. For instance, the mandatory military service system for men has contributed to re-establishment of systematic male dominance in traditional Korea, producing the notion of women as dependent citizens (Moon 2002a:89-98). In exchange for their military service, men have gained not only superior social status but also economic benefits in terms of job entry and promotion. On the other hand, in the name of national development, the previous Korean leaderships mobilised public discourses of hard work and personal sacrifice, and at the same time had repressive labour controls, keeping wage levels as low as possible and prohibiting workers' collective activities and bargaining. The military state's labour laws and policies in favour of labour managements had a more severe impact on female workers due to their secondary workers' status. Women's inferior status was also apparent in workplace labour unions and, as a consequence, female-only unions have emerged to fight for the improvement of women's working conditions and benefits since the 1970s (Lee and Kang 2001: Shin and Chang 2001).

After the 1997 financial crisis, nationalism grew and was represented as support for the state-led economic restructuring. In the process of the SAP-based restructuring, public discourse of personal sacrifice in employment became pervasive for the sake of rescuing the troubled economy. However, the desirable way of patriotic living for Korean women was significantly gendered (Kim and Finch 2002). For instance, unemployed household heads had a particularly difficult time, especially if they were the only income source of the family.

During this time television news and newspaper articles vigorously reported family members showing their support and love to their male household heads. However, neither female household heads nor unemployed female workers were represented in these news articles and television news reports as the ones who needed family support just like their male counterparts. Additionally, women's role as a family caretaker was highlighted to a great extent if their male household head faced unemployment. In many cases, the wives had to enter the labour market to sustain their family economy instead of their unemployed husband. Nevertheless, new entries of women into the labour market were mostly destined for non-regular forms of employment (Shin 2002).

1.2.4 How does women's employment change in recessions?

The underlying presupposition of this research is that women's employment experience was different from that of men due to women's inferior workers' status. In order to identify the most powerful idea explaining women's employment changes in the post crisis Korea, this thesis looks at three different theories that predict the impact of economic cycles on women's employment. They are women as a reserve army of labour, job segregation, and substitution.

First, the woman as a reserve army of labour theory asserts that women serve as a flexible reserve pool of labour to supplement the labour market in upturns and return to the home in downturns (Beechy and Perkins 1987:124; Bruegel 1979). Next, job segregation theory predicts that a rigid sex-typing of occupations protects women's employment from the influences of dynamic economic

cycles. Job segregation theory proposes 'women's jobs', such as nursing and teaching, are not sensitive to economic changes as much as men's jobs, such as manufacturing and trading, and thus the gender-segmented labour market shields women's occupations under most economic changes (Milkman 1987:28). Finally, the job substitution theory stresses that economic recession provides women with new opportunities to participate in paid work because employers, pressed to cut costs and increase the flexibility of production, substitute women for men within their workforces because women are a comparatively cheaper form of labour (Humphries 1988).

According to the major findings of my study, that women's workforce and employment rates declined at a greater rate than those of men, the woman as a reserve army of labour theory provides the most appropriate explanation for the Korean case in 1998. Entering the economic recovery period of 1999, a larger number of women than men re-entered the labour market because women provided a lower-wage and more flexible form of labour preferred by demand-side. The prediction of substitution theory seems only partially relevant to the Korean case because women substituted the jobs previously performed by other women or themselves, not men, in most cases by accepting non-regular employment conditions. This is the most significant finding of this study. The details of the analysis will be discussed in chapter 6 and 7.

1.3 Scope of the study

The major focuses of this study are on the gendered pattern of employment changes in post 1997 Korea and factors affecting gender differentials in the Korean labour market. Korea's post 1997 employment changes are largely caused by the recession brought on by the economic crisis and employment adjustment based on the neo-liberal SAPs. Therefore, this study looks into the neo-liberal labour arrangement in terms of its characteristics, employment outcomes, shortcomings, and gender impact. In addition, it explains in what process and in what pattern Korea came to adapt to the neo-liberal labour arrangement. It was during the post crisis restructuring period that Korea actively adjusted to the labour arrangement. The adjustment was slow during the pre-crisis period because of the labour side's rigorous opposition. Therefore, this study looks at the 1997 crisis as a critical pushing factor for the Korean government to pursue neo-liberal employment adjustment within a short time period. Consequently, Korea's state-led top-down adjustment approach focused on producing short-term outcomes including facilitating firms' flexible labour use but lacked consideration for fair employment policies preventing discrimination against women.

Other studies which looked at impacts of the SAPs based employment adjustment in crisis-affected countries have been primarily based on developing countries in Latin and Central America and Africa (Baden 1993; Commonwealth Secretariat 1991; Judisman and Moreno 1990). Few have focused on the 1997-Asian financial crisis-affected countries⁹, especially Korea in which the

Confucian and political economic authoritarian traditions are mingled with the global capitalist market mechanism. On the other hand, many studies have also been conducted seeking the impact of economic recession on women's employment (Brugel 1979; Humphries 1988; Milkman 1976; Rubery and Tarling 1988). In their studies a recession is generally seen as a cyclical economic downturn period following economic expansion, and it is neither necessarily affected by an economic shock nor accompanied with the SAPs-based restructuring. In the meantime, some studies have looked into the impacts of the SAPs on women in the transitional economies from the conventional to the neo-liberal market standards (Bakker 1994; Beneria 1999; Chant 1996; Elson 1991, 1994; ILO 1998; Sen and Grown 1987).

Few studies have examined the impact of the 1997 economic crisis on Korean women's employment in individual industries based on fieldwork¹⁰. This study is important because it covers comprehensive employment issues underlined during the post 1997 period embracing gender-discrimination in employment practices and in union organisation, and gender segregation of occupation in the workplaces based on the empirical research. These issues are examined both through a literature review and analysis of the secondary employment data and also through a questionnaire survey data, and personal interviews conducted by the researcher. The results of the surveys and interviews, to which both male and female bank workers responded in Korea in 2001, show how women's experiences were different from those for men and how individual workers perceived the employment changes in the real-life context.

There have been several studies examining employment issues of the Korean banking industry. The studies performed before the crisis period were mostly focusing on the gender-differentiated employment system (*yeohangwonjedo*) (Moon 1998; Park 1996) and the advancement of the technology and its impacts on the labour movement (Cho et al. 1995). Meanwhile, the studies presented after the crisis have been primarily based on unfair employment practices and non-regularisation of women's work in the process of bank restructuring (Cho 2000; Kim, J. G. 1999 ; Kwun 2001), and the changes in the employment system in the banks (Kim, J. G. 1999). Particularly, Soon-Kyeong Cho (2000) and Hae-Ja Kwun (2001) criticised the Korean government-led labour market reform on the basis of the neo-liberalism in post 1997 Korea. For instance, Cho examined the intentional discrimination against women in the post 1997 banks and its implication for the law protecting equal employment, by looking into prior dismissal of the inside married couples in *Nonghyeop* as a case study. On the other hand, Kwun looked at the disproportional decline in the number of female regular workers in the banks as one of the examples showing the failure of the Kim Dae-Jung regime's labour market reform.

There have also been several studies looking into the employment issues in the apparel industry. Most of the studies were performed prior to the 1997 crisis, primarily focusing on female workers' employment conditions in the apparel factories (Kim K. H. 1996; Lee, O. J. 1993; Park 1993, 1995; Seguíno 1997). Specifically, in their studies, Lee, Park, and Seguíno looked at the poor quality of the factory women's working conditions in terms of wages, working hours, occupations, and workers' rights. The basis of their argument is the view that these female workers' docile, submissive, and low-

wage labour contributed to the export-led economic growth of the country in the early stage of the country's industrialisation. However, these women faced difficulties in being integrated into the development due to the prevailing patriarchal and capital-driven system in both domestic and international contexts.

Some studies have focused on the apparel factory women's working conditions in transition since the late 1980s (Chang et al. 1995; Kang 1995; KWWAU 1997; Womenlink 1997). For instance, Chang et al. examined the changes in women workers' employment changes caused by the advancement of technology in the apparel industry. The findings of the study can be summarised as follows. The large and middle-size firms, rather than small and micro-size firms, were leading the advancement of technology in production, partially affecting the greater decline in the number of female manufacturing workers compared to that for men. On the other hand, Korean Women Workers Association United (KWWAU) and *Yeoseongminuhoe* (Womenlink) studies on the changing business pattern of the Korean apparel industry showed increases in the relocation of production to overseas and increases in small or micro-sized subcontracting or outsourcing firms. The major focus of these studies was based on the decline in the importance of employment in the industry and worsening of female workers' employment conditions. Nonetheless, there has been little research examining the employment changes in the post 1997 apparel industry based on fieldwork.

In the case of HMC, most of the literature is related to its labour management strategies (Choi 1989; Kwon 2001) as an example of the Korean family conglomerates, *jaebeol*, in line with the authoritarian

state's labour policies or the 1987 Hyundai group workers' struggles (Koo 2001:238-250). HMC has also been the focus in some studies in regard to the union's struggle against the management's one-side lay-off strategy (Cho 2000; Lee, J. S. 2002:180-190) or the dynamics of the union's inside politics dealing with the post 1997 employment adjustment (Cho 1999). Among these studies, only Cho focused on the details of HMC female workers' struggles at that time¹¹.

However, any attempt to empirically examine the effects of recession and adjustment on women's work separately has not been successfully achieved because of complicated empirical and methodological problems (Baden 1993). The problems include identifying the length and nature of pre-adjustment economic crisis, the timing and phasing of the introduction of SAPs, and the degree of implementation of the programs in each country. Additionally, difficulties in collecting accurate data set, such as time series of gender-disaggregated employment or economic activity data before and after the implementation of SAPs during crisis-affected periods, constrain the separate empirical examination of the impacts of recession and SAPs on women's work at an individual country level (Anker 1983; Beneria 1992). Hence, it is suggested that the effects of recession on employment generally can be analysed in terms of how female workforce rates, underemployment and unemployment, and wages are affected during a recession (Baden 1993). On the other hand, the impact of employment adjustment can be measured by the way employment patterns change in different sectors of the economy and how wages vary between sectors.

The difficulties in examining the effects of recession and adjustment separately in Korea also directed this study to pursue the

examination of the effects of recession and adjustment on women's work separately. Following the methods used in others' studies, this study compares the changes in men and women's employment data in terms of workforce participation, unemployment, industrial and occupational distribution, and workers' status. This study makes comparisons in terms of the three time periods of the pre 1997 crisis, the 1998 recession, and the 1999 recovery (largely, the employment adjustment period). Thus, this study is able to show the separate impacts of the post crisis recession and employment adjustment in a considerable depth in the Korean context. Moreover, the three case studies contribute to identifying the impact of recession and employment adjustment on women's employment in individual industries during the crisis-affected period.

1.4 Research questions and methodology

1.4.1 Research Questions

The central research questions of this thesis are as follows. In the 1997 crisis-affected period:

1. How were women's employment experiences different from those of men?
2. How did individual workers themselves analyse employment changes in their workplace?
3. What factors account for gender-differentiated employment changes?

1.4.2 Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, which is also called 'triangulation' (Blaikie 2000; Campbell and Fiske 1959; Denzine 1978). The purpose for the mixed-method approach is to attain some level of triangulation by using different data sources and different methods (Creswell 2003). In addition, the mixed methodology enables support and validation of the qualitative method by the quantitative method (Greene et al. 1989). In this thesis, aggregate employment data, questionnaire surveys, and individual interviews are the major data sources and they are analysed by descriptive statistics and personal narratives. Importantly, this thesis uses empirical data from case studies of three industries (commercial banking, apparel, and HMC) as well as aggregate employment data. The descriptive statistical analysis of the aggregate employment data offers a broad examination of the employment changes. On the other hand, the case studies based on the secondary, survey, and interview data analyses show comprehensive employment changes in the industries, including not only the numerical changes but also individual worker's analysis of their employment experiences.

Mixed methodology. Numerical analysis based upon quantified information seems most self-evident, objective, and predictable, whereas qualitative information can be seen as flexible, subjective, uncertain, and lacking controls (Blaikie 2000:243). As a result, according to Blaikie, 'qualitative methods are viewed as being supplementary to quantitative methods and perhaps, as inferior'. However, the apparent advantages of quantitative methods can be achieved by relying on the assumption that there exists a sufficiently

close correspondence between properties of a number system and features of the original data. According to Turner (1994: 195),

We may regularly count apples or sheep or pounds sterling. But every apple, every animal is unique. When we count, we merely agree, tacitly, that for this everyday purpose, we are willing to apply rules which disregard the differences between individual apples or individual sheep, and which stress their similarities for numbering purposes.

Therefore, quantitative research may not be sufficient to apprehend and interpret the social and individual reality of people. On the other hand, qualitative research is seen as having a 'naturalistic, interpretative approach to the world', attempting to make sense of phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values, etc.) which people are attached to within their social worlds in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:3).

The combination of the two methods is thought to overcome the weakness or innate biases stemming from a single methodology, and to enable the advantages of each methodology to complement each other (Brewer and Hunter 1989:17). Specifically, Greene et al. (1989) proposed five purposes for mixed methods in a single study. They are: triangulation in the classic sense of seeking convergence of results; complementarity, in that overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon may emerge (for example, peeling the layers of an onion); development, wherein the first method is used sequentially to help inform the second method; initiation, wherein contradictions and fresh perspectives emerge; and expansion, wherein the mixed methods add scope and breadth to a study. In pursuit of these five

purposes, this study uses the mixed methodology, drawing on data collected from different data sources and in different ways.

In explaining the changing pattern of employment before and after the crisis, this study mainly involves the quantitative method, specifically descriptive statistics, for the analysis of the aggregate employment data. Descriptive statistics enables a simplification of wide-ranging numerical data in a sensible way and, therefore, it is useful in looking at the changing patterns of the large amount of longitudinal employment data used in this research. For the case studies, this study involves a 'between methods' approach, drawing on quantitative (secondary data and questionnaire survey) and qualitative (personal interview) data collection and analyses. The details of the case studies are shown in the next section.

Case studies. The banking, apparel, and car manufacturing industries are very different in terms of the nature and pattern of business and employment. However, it has been said that changes in women's employment in recessions can be shown in different ways depending on a country's industrial or sectoral development stage (Baden 1993; Humphries 1988). Therefore, aiming to examine dissimilar employment experiences, this research chose three unrelated industries for the case studies.

A case study is seen as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (Yin 2003:13). In addition, such an empirical inquiry enables an avoidance of 'ecological fallacy', caused by extending conclusions based on group data to individuals (Baker 1994:283). Sieber (1973) proposed integrating fieldwork (interview) and survey methods in recognition

of the fact that each method can be greatly strengthened by appealing to the unique qualities of the other. He identified the benefits of the integration of the two methods in all phases of research, including design, data collection, and analysis. For instance, exploratory interviews and observations can assist in the formulation of the research problem (and questions), the identification of appropriate respondents, the yield of valuable information about the receptivity, frames of reference, and span of attention of respondents.

Additionally, fieldwork can assist in the analysis and interpretation of survey data by providing a theoretical structure, validating or providing plausibility for the survey findings, and assisting in the interpretation of the results. Fieldwork surveys could provide statistical profiles of the population to be investigated, ensuring which categories of people to be chosen for the survey and offering basic background data to be covered in interviews. Surveys can also correct the tendency of field observers to see all aspects of a social situation as congruent and verify fieldwork observation. In pursuit of the advantages of the integration of surveys and interviews, the researcher conducted the questionnaire surveys and individual interviews with employees of each commercial banking and apparel industry during the field research.

Why the industries of commercial banking, apparel, and HMC?

The commercial banking industry is selected for a case study in this thesis to show the employment experiences of female white-collar workers in the financial sector. The employment adjustment in this industry was mainly through non-gender neutral lay-off policies and non-regularisation of female tellers (Cho 2000; Kim, J. G. 1999 ; Kwun 2001; Shin 2002). The case of HMC, a male-concentrated workplace,

is known as the female cafeteria workers' struggles against the three male-dominant organisations, the state, the management and the labour union (Cho 2000a:303-5; Lee, J. S. 2002:180-9; Womenlink 2001). Similar to the banking sector, HMC's employment restructuring, specifically through forceful dismissal and non-regularisation of the workforce, was performed based on the female cafeteria workers exclusively. On the other hand, the apparel industry in which women accounted for approximately two-thirds of the total workforce in 1998 shows somewhat different post 1997 employment changes compared to the former two industries. The apparel industry, as well as the textile industry, is seen as a major industry manifesting the characteristics of male bias over labour management in Korea (Lee, O. J. 1993; Park 1995). Yet, the analysis of the aggregate employment data in 1998 shows a slightly greater job decline for men than for women and this was a very rare case (MOLAB 2003). Despite the industry's unusual employment outcome, few studies have focused on the detailed employment changes that occurred in the industry during the period. Therefore, this thesis aims to examine factors determining the employment changes which occurred during the crisis-affected period and how workers perceived their experiences.

Data collection. The analysis of the nationwide aggregate employment data, primarily collected by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and the Ministry of Labour of Korea (MOLAB), shows the numerical employment changes during the reference period of this study. Specifically, the employment data used in this research are men and women's workforce participation rates, unemployment rates, employment rates by industrial and occupational division, and

workers' status from 1997 to 1999. Additionally, the changes in wages and working hours are also shown in the research.

The sources of the secondary data used in the case studies are a particular industry-related documentation from each industry, *Women's Labour in the Banking Industry* (2000), from Korean Federation of Financial Labour Unions (KFFLU) and *Textile Yearbook* (1999) from Korean Federation of Textile Industries (KOFOTI). The data from the documentations include the occupational differences between men and women, and employment conditions in terms of wage and workers status, and so forth. Descriptive method is used for the examination of the data from the secondary documents and the surveys. A summary of the secondary data shows general changes in the nature and condition of each industry during the crisis-affected period, and the survey outcome provides workers' perceptions of the employment changes and working conditions in a numerical, descriptive way. These two quantitative methods are expected to corroborate the information from the individual interviews.

The first part of the questionnaire survey included some questions looking at the general backgrounds of the respondents, such as gender, age, a major task in the workplace, employment status, a monthly wage level, working hours and so forth. Then, some specific questions followed as to how the employment changes were made in the recession, if they were gender-differentiated and, if yes, what the factors causing gender differences in employment were. Some of the answers for the questions were expected to offer information that had not been discussed in official statistics, such as the logistics of personnel management in the workplace, a corporation's lay-off

policies, and the attitude of the workers toward such employment changes.

On the other hand, the individual interviews were carried out in order to investigate people's personal perspectives, in-depth understanding of the personal context within the research phenomena were located, and comprehensive subject coverage. Therefore, the interview analysis is the strength of this research as it informs how women workers themselves negotiated employment changes in their workplace and how the society analysed women's experiences in the post 1997 labour market. This qualitative part of the research analysis offers the explanations for the three central inquiries: how and in what pattern the employment changed during the crisis-affected period; if the changes occurred along gender lines; and what factors account for them. The questions for the survey and interviews were created based upon the existing literature and the preliminary findings of the descriptive statistics based on the secondary data. Finally, the questions were finalised in consultation with the research supervisor and a few employees in each sector.

I conducted both questionnaire survey and interview during the fieldwork period from September to November in 2001. The respondents for the surveys and interviews were randomly chosen. For the banking industry, I visited several different bank shops and approached workers for the interviews individually. After many such approaches, eight workers, three men and five women, willingly participated in the interviews and assisted in distributing the questionnaire surveys to their colleagues in the workplace. As a result, 109 people from eight different banks responded to the survey.

In the case of the apparel industry, I visited two different trade union offices (*Cheonggacheon* Apparel Labour Union¹² and Korean Federation of Textile Trade Union¹³, thereafter KOFTTU), in seeking volunteers for the interviews and surveys. All eight interviewees were labour unionists, four from *Cheonggacheon* Apparel Labour Union, based on micro or small-size factories, and four from KOFTTU, based largely on small and medium-size factories. With the interviewees' assistance, 89 questionnaire surveys were completed.

Survey and interview area. The field research was undertaken in Seoul, the capital city of Korea, from September to November 2001. Seoul was selected as it is the centre of the national economic activities, including banking and the manufacture of apparel. Specifically, in terms of the importance of the banking industry in Seoul, the city had 37.0 per cent of the country's bank shops and dealt with 52.4 per cent of the country's total bank-transacted money in 1999 (Choi, Y. H. 2000). In the case of the apparel industry, 77.2 per cent of the country's apparel production was located in the Seoul area¹⁴ in the year of 1998 (KOFOTI 1999).

The reference period. The time period before and after the 1997 crisis is centrally examined in this research. Given that the crisis occurred at the end of 1997 and the country's GDP grew as high as 5 per cent, the year of 1997 is looked at as a pre-crisis period, whereas 1998 and 1999 are considered as the crisis-affected period. Specifically, the year 1998 was the recession period seriously affected by the crisis and the year 1999 was rather an economic recovery period. In the surveys and interviews 1998 was indicated as a single

recession period. However, the neo-liberal labour reform was undertaken in 1998 and rigorously continued until 1999 in many industries. Therefore, employment shifts appearing in 1999 are somewhat distinctive as they show combined outcome of the recession and recovery period.

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

The organisation of the thesis is as following. In the second chapter, I will examine rational and non-rational explanations for gender differentials in paid work. The examination is based on different viewpoints, depending on whether these differences are considered to be rational or non-rational oriented. Although human capital theory upholds a rational economic point of view, a set of economic theories of labour market discrimination and feminist theories advocate the existence of non-rational market factors producing employment differences between men and women. In analysing the factors, the advocates of the economic theories explain gender inequality in the labour market based on the traditional gender division of labour but do not incorporate gender as an integral part of the model. On the other hand, feminist theories use gender as a central category of analysis in explaining gender inequality in the labour market and propose the ideological explanations (patriarchy and capitalism) determining women's subordination in both household and paid work. This chapter provides an important understanding of gendered process of employment transformation during crisis-affected periods, which will be intensively discussed in the next chapter.

The third chapter will look into the gender dimensions of post crisis and neo-liberal structural adjustment with a focus on employment outcomes. In the process of post 1997 labour market restructuring, Korea as well as other crisis-affected countries reformed the labour market based on the SAPs and intensified the neo-liberal principles in the market. With the aim of providing theoretical explanations for employment transformation in post 1997 Korea, this chapter will explore other crisis-affected countries' experiences in terms of gender inequalities in the process of their economic restructuring in accordance with macroeconomic policies included in the IMF-based SAPs. The chapter then will focus on the characteristics of the neo-liberal labour approach, a principle of the labour market policies in SAPs, and the gender impacts of the approach. Finally, the final section of this chapter discusses three theories predicting changes in women's employment in the post crisis economic restructuring period. The three theories of women as a reserve army of labour, job segregation, and substitution are used to explain the Korean case in chapter 5.

In chapters 5 to 6 I will focus on the Korean case. In the fourth chapter I examine a history of gendered processes of social transformation in contemporary Korea. The major aim of this chapter is to analyse gender hierarchy, specifically how and in what forms hierarchical gender relations have historically been introduced or reconstructed. This will be linked to the gendered structure of the Korean labour market. In explaining gender hierarchy, I will look at both institutional (that is, political, economic, social) and ideological (that is, Confucianism, modernisation) factors affecting men and women's roles, identities and power relations in the Korean historical context. Examination of gender hierarchy is important

because it offers a useful understanding of the gendered processes of socio-economic adjustment during the post 1997 crisis period.

The next two chapters concern the analysis of the employment changes which occurred during the two years of 1998 and 1999. The central argument of these two chapters is that Korea's neo-liberal labour adjustment, focusing on flexible dismissal of redundant regular workforce and of hiring substitute workers, was carried out based on patriarchal gender biases. In support of the argument, in the fifth chapter I first demonstrate gender discriminatory practices in employment which have persistently existed in Korea but have been reinforced after the 1997 crisis. Then, I focus on the comparative analysis of the aggregate employment data showing gender differences in employment changes during the reference period on the basis of the three theories predicting changes of women's employment in recession. This analysis shows the greater impact of the employment adjustment on women than men in terms of job losses during the 1998 recession and the decline in the importance of full-time regular jobs and this is relevant to the theory of women as a reserve army of labour.

Connected to the findings of chapter 5, in the sixth chapter I will introduce the three case studies of this thesis, which include the industries of commercial banking, apparel and car manufacturing, specifically HMC. The central objectives of the case studies are to show how individual workers experienced the gendered pattern of employment transformation in their workplace and how they perceived gender differentials in employment. The analysis of the empirical research, primarily based on my fieldwork (surveys and individual interviews), demonstrates that female workers were more

vulnerable than were men to the changes in employment through dismissal of workforce, decline in wages, and replacement of regular workers with non-regular workers. In particular, the findings of the three cases support the belief that employment discrimination against women prevailed during the adjustment period based on the male breadwinner notion and caused more negative job changes for women than for men. As a result, firms' employment adjustment based on the SAPs but with little consideration for fair employment policies exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and gender biases in employment.

In the seventh and the last chapter, I will look into two important labour market issues that emerged from this research. The first issue concerns the decline in employment security and benefits as a consequence of Korea's labour market adjustment focusing on only the enhancement of employment flexibility through dismissal of redundant workforce and hiring more non-regular workers. This is significantly related to the increase in Korean women's representation in non-regular employment following the crisis. The second issue is associated with institutional and individual challenges to protect female workers from gender discrimination in the workplace. The challenges have arisen from within legal and government institutions as well as in trade unions, especially evidenced by the resurgence of female-only unions after the crisis.

Notes

¹ The case of HMC relies on evidence from secondary sources, including the existing literature, news articles, and information offered by women's organisations in Korea.

² The studies showing gender-differentiated employment changes in post crisis Korea by analysing various nationwide employment data can be seen in Chang (2001), Keum (2002), and Kim (2000). In addition, a number of studies have been done focusing on the increasing trend of non-regularisation of Korean workforce in relation to gender differentials in post 1997 Korea. They include Ahn (2003), Han and Chang (2003), Kim (2004a; 2004b).

³ The details of the analysis will be represented in chapter 5.

⁴ Socialist feminist writings including discussions of women, class and work from psychological as well as sociological and economic perspectives are later discussed in the useful anthologies of Hansen and Philipson (1990), Hennessy and Ingraham (1997), and Holmstrom (2002). In addition, Spivak (1988), Mohanty, Carby (1997) and Hennessy (1993, 2000) have created and re-articulated forms of Marxism and socialist feminism by paying attention to close contextual analysis of power relations of gender and class as they relate to work.

⁵ Feminists have presented various arguments concerning the causes and forces associated with patriarchy. Amongst many scholars who have constructed the definition of patriarchy, for instance, Gerda Lerner (1993:239) defines Patriarchy as 'the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general'. Focusing on the relation between men in the definition, in her article 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism', Heidi Hartmann defines patriarchy as 'a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women' (1981:14). Hartmann's discussion of patriarchy is represented in chapter 2.

⁶ In conceptualising patriarchy at different levels of abstraction, Walby suggests six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institution.

⁷ Maria Mies (1986:46-7) calls this trend 'housewifisation' of women and argues that capitalist industrialisation transforms the majority of women who used to be producers into housewives whose efforts sustain and reproduce the workforce, thereby freeing men for paid employment outside households.

⁸ Indian historian Partha Chatterjee observed the gendered process of Indian's modernisation during British colonial and the early postcolonial period. Based on his research, he asserted, 'No matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not lose their essentially spiritual (that is feminine) virtues; they must not, in other words, become essentially Westernised' (1993:126). This assertion derived from his observation that Indian women's modernity was different from that of men. In particular, Chatterjee saw India's nationalist movement during the British colonial period, which focused on the figure of the Indian women as representing the realm of the home (or keepers of tradition). Yuval-Davis argued that placing the 'burden of representation' of the collective identity and future destiny on women was often used to legitimise the control and oppression of women, and construct them as bearers of a nation's essence and

honour, rather than as subjects with an agency of their own and thereby it did not necessarily increase women's status in society (1997:45-7). Chatterjee also argues that in the process of the Indian nation building, the nationalist elites maintained a caste system because it was seen to be essential to construct national culture reflecting the traditional social position and cultural experiences for a stable and harmonious social order.

⁹ The literature on the impact of the 1997 Asian crisis includes Lorraine Corner (1998) with a focus on the economic impact of women in the crisis-affected countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, and Korea, and Philippines. UNESCAP (1999) and Atinc and Walton (1998) examined the social impact of the crisis.

¹⁰ This thesis acknowledges two studies, examining the impact of the 1997 economic crisis on Korean women's employment based on fieldwork. First, in 1998, Christine Sylvester conducted research on women who owned and were operating small family-style restaurants in Pusan (2000:102-104). Based on 15 lengthy interviews, she learned that the women's working conditions got harder and the returns on their labour were diminishing after the crisis. The second research was conducted by Seung-Kyung Kim and John Finch (2002). Their fieldwork focused on how middle and low-class housewives coped with the economic difficulties brought by the crisis. They argued that many middle-class housewives who did not previously work were urged to enter the labour market to make a financial contribution for their family and they increasingly participated in the informal sector jobs such as a home-based private tutoring or daily cleaning jobs. The situation was not any different for low-class women. Their study claimed, 'in many families, the gender-role dichotomy, with "the husband as breadwinner and the wife as household manager" was fundamentally shaken as a result of the economic crisis' (2002:131).

¹¹ In their study, Kim and Finch (2002) presented the HMC female workers' struggle briefly as an example of Korean firms' 'laying off women first' policy during the crisis-affected period and analysed the case as revealing that 'management, government and unions all shared a Confucian patriarchal ideology that allowed them to consider women more expendable.'

¹² *Cheonggaechon* is one of the well-known apparel production regions in Seoul, particularly for its conventional and informal business operation.

¹³ KOFTTU belongs to FKTU consisting of 28 different member industries including textile, rail, metal, chemical, taxi, etc (FKTU 2002).

¹⁴ Seoul area includes Seoul, *Kyeong-gi* province and *In-cheon* city.

2. Economic and non-economic explanations for gender differences in paid work

2.1 Introduction

In Korea, women's experience of the labour market is different from that of men in terms of nature and value of their labour. In general, Korean women are likely to occupy positions that are lower in status, skills and authority. Moreover, a majority of female workers are crowded in a limited number of occupations, which are mostly similar to work done by women in the household, such as caring, nursing, assisting and light-manufacturing. The lower status of women in paid work is seen to be a universal fact, visible in all societies to a greater or lesser degree (Schech and Haggis 2000:85). Such differences by gender in paid work seem to appear not only because of biological differences but also because of other various factors, including political, economic, socio-cultural, and ideological factors (Ortner 1974:16; Redclift and Sinclair 1990:2).

There are two major approaches to explain gender differences in paid work. They depend on whether these differences are considered to be rational or non-rational oriented. The rational economic approach is represented as the human capital theory, which sees gender differences in employment caused by labour market actors' rational choice and behaviours in accordance with differences in men and women's human capital (that is, personal characteristics such as education, experience, and constraints). At a simple level, the theory proposes that individuals with better human capital are preferred in the labour market because they are expected to have higher

productivity at work (Becker 1965; Mincer 1962, 1993; Mincer and Polachek 1974; Reskin 1993; Schultz 1975).

The non-rational economic approach emerged from critics of human capital theory and proposes non-rational market factors as major causes of gender differences in employment. These critics consist of two main groups depending on whether or not comprehensive gender analysis is involved in their study. The first group is made up of economists who accept employment discrimination based on the labour demand-side's preference for a certain workers' group in accordance with personal tastes, imperfect market information, or dual segmented market structure. Specifically, these economic-oriented gender discrimination explanations can be represented by three specific theories: 'tastes for discrimination' (Becker 1957, 1965, 1985), 'statistical discrimination' (Arrow 1971; Phelps 1972:659-61; Sattinger 1998; Thurow 1975:170-1) and 'dual labour market' (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Gordon 1974) and they primarily focus on irrational market operation by the labour demand-side. The second group accounts for feminist scholars proposing gender-related explanations. While the economists' views are limited to acknowledging the existence of gender discrimination in employment without profound analysis of its causes, the feminist approach focuses on ideological and historical origins of gender differences in production (patriarchal and capitalist market operation), as well as the outcome of the differences (discrimination) (Eisenstein 1979, 1981; Hartmann 1979, 1981; Jaggar 1983; Mies 1986; Sokoloff 1980).

This thesis takes the view that the interacting systems of patriarchy and a capitalistic mode of production are important in shaping

asymmetric gender division of labour in paid work, privileging men in terms of power and values. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the pattern and structure of production for goods and services have changed in pursuit of more flexible and informal labour operation across the world, even in developing countries in which labour operation has always been flexible and informal (Standing 2002:33-4). Standing asserts, 'although women have continued to face discrimination and disadvantage across the world, they have been drawn into labour force activities alongside men' (2002:34). This is described as 'feminisation' of the workforce. One aspect of the phenomenon is shown as an increase in women's workforce participation rate in contrast to a decline in that for men, and in other words, women's substitution for men in various occupational categories including manufacturing and production work (Elson 1996:37). Standing also points out, 'the type of jobs traditionally pushed onto women have been spreading relative to the jobs taken by men' and 'jobs are being feminised, in that a growing proportion are precarious, low paying and low status' (2002:34).

Women's contribution to family income and formal markets, in terms of reproduction and maintenance of human resources, is generally overlooked because much of it is unpaid. Thus, markets tend to regard women as less deserving than men in paid work and, therefore, women are regarded as a lower-wage form of labour resource (Beneria 1999; Elson 1991:7). In addition, women's work, particularly home-related light-manufacturing work such as sewing and weaving, is by and large regarded as 'unskilled' or 'semi-skilled', whereas men's work is identified as 'skilled'. Elson and Pearson (1984:24) said, 'women do not do 'unskilled' jobs because they are the bearers of inferior labour; rather the jobs they do are

'unskilled' because women enter them already determined as inferior bearers of labour'. This assertion derives from the fact that women usually acquire such skills from their domestic activities so that women are not involved in the separate (or intensive) job training that produces these skills of manual dexterity. As a result, women's training in these skills is not socially visible nor are the skills socially recognised, and this is not seen as accidental but as intrinsic to the process of gender construction in the world today. According to Elson and Person (1984:25), the subordination of women as a gender cannot be understood simply as a matter of 'patriarchal attitudes', and 'rather it is a material process which goes on not just in our heads, but in our practices'.

Moreover, gender stereotypes based upon patriarchal tradition - in terms of women's family commitments, embracing child bearing and rearing, less willingness to use physical force, greater tolerance of monotonous and repetitive work, and a lower inclination to join trade unions - prevail in the labour market (Anker 1998). Patriarchal social institutions, such as family, education, labour market, and the state's laws and policies, and also patriarchal culture play an important role in shaping and reinforcing these stereotypes (Bakker 1994; Folbre 2001; Park 1993; Walby 1990). In their study of feminisation of the workforce in seven developed countries¹⁵, Jenson and others (1988:9) found that although women's share of employment rose, the labour market remained rigidly segregated. They argued that the stereotypes based on the deeply-rooted assumptions about proper gender roles and gender relations confined women to work ghettos which involved serving or caring, or which required patience and dexterity.

Elson (1991:170) saw that the gender stereotypes have become 'commonsense' among manufacturers around the world, leading to the view that women are naturally suited to lower pay, higher flexibility, and lower status positions requiring less decision making and less authority. Mies (1986) and other feminist scholars found this as the patriarchal nature of contemporary global capitalism has produced global feminisation of labour in production¹⁶. Moreover, Lim (1983), who examined women's labour in multinational export factories in developing capitalist countries, argued that female employment creation in multinational factories is based on patriarchal exploitation - low absolute and relative wages for women workers. According to Lim, factory employment benefits women to the extent that 'multinationals generally offer a better employment alternative to women than local firms in modern and traditional sectors of economy and also provide a limited escape from the domestic roles imposed by traditional patriarchy' (1983:178). However, the strategy has had limited success in improving women's working conditions, particularly in raising women's wages permanently. This is because the elimination of patriarchal exploitation within a country may eliminate the jobs themselves given the global mobility of multinational capital and the availability of exploitable female labour in other countries. In this way, women's industrial employment is particularly sensitive to changes in macro and microeconomic conditions and to countries' industrial strategies and technological changes in production (Pearson 1998:177). Korea is one of the many countries that have experienced this shifting pattern of women's employment. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the country's upgrading of the level of technology and reduction in the labour intensity of production as a result of an upsurge in wage level

importantly caused a decline in women's employment in the manufacturing workforce.

Such male dominance is sustained through discriminatory practices of exclusion and segregation, prohibiting women from getting certain jobs and positions (Cunnison and Stageman 1993:14; Elson and Pearson 1984:25-6; Walby 1990). Studies of many countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Korea have suggested that the labour market outcomes of women have improved over the twentieth century. However, despite the improvement, gender-based occupational segregation and wage disparities persist in these countries (England 1982; Fortin and Huberman 2002; Jacobs 1989; Keum 2001; Lissenburgh 2000; Watts 1997; Wootton 1997). According to the studies, although women's endowments of human capital, such as educational qualifications, work experience or history, and skill level, are the same as, or better than, those for men, men often gain more important occupations or tasks which generally provide higher wages compared to women. For instance, Lissenburgh (2000) analysed gender wage differentials in the United Kingdom by using the data from the British Household Panel Study (BHPS) and the Employment in Britain (EiB). His study finds that the decline in gender wage differentials which has occurred since the mid 1980s in the United Kingdom is due more to a decline in individual or institutional gender discrimination than to a relative improvement in women's stock of human capital.

The major objective of this chapter is to discuss the nature and value of women's labour in a capitalist labour market, specifically looking at the factors that shape the nature and value of women's labour differently from those of men. The human capital theory is first

presented as a theoretical explanation looking at gender differences in employment based on an outcome of a rational market operation by market actors' natural behaviours. It is followed by the second set of theoretical explanations ('tastes for discrimination', 'statistical discrimination', and 'dual labour market'), focusing on gender discrimination in the labour market. Despite the same economic origin, the three discrimination theories go against the human capital theorists' assertion of a rational market operation but suggest that gender differences in employment are caused by a non-rational market operation shown as labour demand-side's gender preference or bias. The third theoretical explanation arises from gender-related theories which attend to the ideological and historical origins of gender differences. Different groups of feminist theories, the early Marxist feminist theories (also called 'Marxist feminist theories of the home') and the later Marxist feminist theories (dualism and patriarchy capitalism), are discussed in order to explain gender relationship in both home and production. Finally, the last section of this chapter examines systems and institutions forming and reinforcing systematic male dominance in labour market.

2.2 Human Capital Theory

Neo-classical economics supports human capital theory, which originally emerged to explain the nature and causes of inequality in personal incomes (Becker 1957, 1965; Mincer 1962, 1993; Reskin 1993; ILO 1997; Schultz 1988). Jacob Mincer (1993:69), one of the pioneers of human capital theory explains,

Human capital is an old concept but a relatively new research area in economics. The central idea is that human capacities are in large part acquired or developed through informal and formal education at home and at school, and through training, experience, and mobility in the labour market. These activities are costly, as they involve direct expenses and earnings or consumption forgone by students, by trainees, and by workers in the process of labour mobility. Since benefits derived from these activities accrue mainly in the future and are for the most part quite durable, the costly acquisition of human capacities is an act of investment. Deterioration of health and erosion or obsolescence of skills represent depreciation of human capital which is offset, though not indefinitely, by maintenance activities such as the production of health or retraining.

According to human capital analysts, there are a great number of variables and activities determining the magnitude and development of investments to improve the future productivity of manpower (Bodenhofer 1967; Mincer 1993:70). Exclusive attention has been paid to investment in formal education and training, especially focusing on the examination of the evidence on costs, benefits, and rates of return to education and training. On average, employers pay higher wages to the more-educated workers because evidently, the value productivity of the better-educated workers is seen and experienced as higher than that of the less-educated worker (Bodenhofer 1967). The acquisition of qualifications and skills through informal vocational and on-the job training is another important determinant. Furthermore, various organised and informal influences on individuals in the private and social environment, including family

life, mass media, and training in the army, are also an educational resource.

Human capital theory advocates that the individual is both a commodity and a rational economic person in the determining of the level and the pattern of economic activity and allocation of human resources in response to economic demand (Polachek and Siebert 1993:20). Mincer (1993:26-7) explains that the process of investment is subject to free choice and says,

The choice refers to training differing primarily in the length of time it requires. Since the time spent in training represents a postponement of earnings to a later stage, the assumption of rational choice means an equalisation of present values of life-earnings at the time the choice is made.

In making a decision about who in a family should be educated, some human capital theorists use the notion of comparative advantage (Becker 1957; Blau and Ferber 1992:37-8). According to the comparative advantage theory, specialisation is an important concept affecting individuals' rational choice and behaviour in terms of maximising the household output. It is seen that a family member who is regarded as being more specialised to do domestic work and to make more comparative value out of the job should be responsible for it. Hence, in accordance with the traditional gender roles, the theory assumes that women have comparative advantage in domestic work, while it is more advantageous for men to be involved in market earning activities. As a result, men are usually the ones who have better education or job training opportunities.

Other human capital theorists proposed the family life-cycle approach in explaining individuals' decision-making behaviours in investment and employment processes (Mincer and Polachek 1974; Polachek and Siebert 1993:20-2; Rosenfeld 1978). Similar to the comparative advantage explanation, the life-cycle approach has also been used to explain gender differences in the labour market. Time constraints, basically brought by the mid-life child rearing expectations of women, influence the job choices of men and women in families. The human capital theory assumes that workers' productivity declines while the acquired skills are not being used so that deterioration of skills makes it difficult for women to catch up with updated skills when they re-enter the labour market (Polachek and Siebert 1993:20-2). This is seen as one of the reasons why women are less likely to participate in high-profile professional occupations, particularly where technology or information is changing quickly, such as in the medical, science and technology sectors.

Therefore, according to the family life-cycle approach, the possibility of the more intermittent lifetime workforce participation of women due to their mother and wife roles is the major reason that women have limited access to educational or job training programs. This approach also explains why employers are reluctant to invest their money and time in training women workers. The lower level of female human capital, including less education and fewer skills, results in occupational segregation by gender, which refers to women being segregated into so called 'women's jobs', characterised as low-wage, less prestigious, less skilled, and contingent jobs (Blau and Ferber 1992; Polachek and Siebert 1993). In this regard, gender division of labour in a family unit based on traditional gender

stereotypes plays an important role in substantiating the whole argument on human capital theory¹⁷.

Meanwhile, in the case of the labour supply of married women, Mincer (1962, 1979, and 1993) argues that a woman chooses the best time to enter paid work, according to two opposing forces determining their work and leisure choices: her own market wage (substitution effect) and her family's welfare (income effect). In determining labour supply in the household context, women tend to stay in paid work if the real wage rate increases. This is because an increase in women's real wage rate means a rise in the opportunity cost of their leisure time. According to Mincer, in most cases, women's workforce participation is decided according to the level of maximising family's welfare. Significantly, husbands' income level has an important influence on married women's workforce participation. However, Mincer's model ignored the existence of involuntarily unemployed married women. It has been said that women are likely to have a three-way choice, rather than two: paid work, leisure, or unpaid housework (Walby 1986: 72).

Cross-sectional studies usually have showed an inverse relationship between husband's income and women's workforce participation rate (Jalivand 2000). One study shows that a number of married women with a higher income-earning husband participate in paid work increasingly and are likely to make higher earnings as well (Ryscavage 1979). This finding suggests that there are some other factors, such as women's positive perception of paid work and careers as sources of psychological and monetary rewards, affecting a decision on women's workforce participation apart from husband's income (Mott and Shapiro 1983). Such a change in women's

perception of their workforce participation has contributed to a weakening of the traditional family notion - husband as a breadwinner and wife as a homemaker - in recent decades (Jalivand 2000).

Evidence of the benefits of education is reinforced by a large body of literature in the international context, for instance, in relation to wage levels (Card and Krueger 1992) and the quality of economic performance contributing to a country's economic growth (Barro 1991; Jung 1992; Mankiw et al. 1992). Despite the positive effect of education on the choice of occupation, two observations of the human capital model are worth pointing out, considering the real labour market situation. First, if the level of education and training determines workers' job choice, it must be true that women with an educational level as high as men should be able to enter the same jobs as men. The second observation concerns the matter of circularity: are women not offered work in particular occupations because they can not satisfy the required job skills, or are women less educated because they do not have the same job opportunities as men (ILO 1997)?

The two observations can be significantly linked to a few fundamental problems that human capital theory addresses (Kang and Shin 2001:133-9). First of all, in regard to the first observation, there is some empirical evidence showing that the same educational attainment does not necessarily ensure an equal job entry between men and women (Duraisamy and Duraisamy 1996; England 1982; Jacobs 1989; Kim, M. 2000; Wootton 1997). For instance, Jacobs (1989:40) provided evidence that women are often under-represented in the United States' labour market, particularly among college

graduates and professional degree recipients, and thus concluded that women spend more years in school on average than do men in order to get the same occupation. In addition, some studies (England 1982; Duncan and Ponza 1984) suggest that educational attainment is not a primary device to make gender differences in the labour market. These studies demonstrate that the educational attainment of women in the male-dominated occupations does not significantly exceed that of women in female-dominated occupations.

In her study of employers' estimates of market wages in two states in the United States, Washington and California, Kim (2000) found that the differences in power between men and women cause wage discrepancies by gender. Specifically, Kim explained that when personnel managers were making decisions about which firms, areas, and jobs would receive a wage increase, male employees and their associations often lobbied for and received the most beneficial decisions for raising their wage rate. Female workers had less representation in unions or less political influence within those unions and, as a result, female-concentrated jobs were often those that resulted in relatively low wages.

With respect to the relationship between education and productivity, there is an alternative viewpoint asserting that it is hard to assume that productivity necessarily increases because of a high level of schooling or job training (Spence 1973, 1976). Despite the positive relationship between education and earnings, education is seen to function only as a screening device or a signal in the hiring process because employers have imperfect information on worker productivity and thus must use applicants' educational attainment as a device to judge individuals' productivity.¹⁸ According to Spence

(1973), the so called 'signalling model' implies that prior to hiring, employers make a hiring decision by examining applicants' observable data including not only education and work experiences but also race, gender, criminal and service records and so forth.

Taking the second observation into consideration, it can be argued that the notion of the low level of women's skill and productivity not only causes but also results from the relatively low wage levels. Women may decide not to obtain a higher level of education and training because they know that they will be a low-wage earner in one way or another. This vicious cycle is examined in terms of labour market discrimination by gender. It is the so called 'feedback effect' of discrimination, primarily explained by Kenneth Arrow (1971). According to Arrow, discrimination against women in the labour market reinforces traditional gender roles in the family, while adherence to traditional roles by women provides a rationale for labour market discrimination.

In conclusion, the major problem of the human capital theory is the acceptance of the gender discriminatory elements in the non-labour market as a basic assumption of the theory. That is, the concept of human capital does not interpret the labour and expenses involved in household activities, specifically in raising children, as investment decisions on the part of their parents (Gardiner 1998). Moreover, the theory takes the notion of labour market discrimination by gender for granted by admitting the traditional gender division of labour in a family unit in a patriarchal mode, such as men as breadwinners and women as unpaid family reproducers (Becker 1985). Therefore, it can be argued that the assumption that the labour market is operated rationally by workers and employers cannot be sustained in the real

market situation. Both gender-based occupational segregation and wage differences with little differences in productivity can be good examples of the gaps existing between the theory and the real world. In sum, human capital theory faces various criticisms, including its justification of gender inequality in the labour market (Kang and Shin 2001).

2.3 Theories of Gender Discrimination in Employment

2.3.1 Taste for preference

Among neoclassical economists, Gary Becker (1957, 1965, 1985, and 1993) first acknowledged the existence of discrimination in the labour market, which goes against the human capital theorists' assertion of a rational market operation by market actors' 'natural' behaviours. Discrimination against certain group characteristics in the labour market is often seen as a major cause of labour market segregation by gender. Specifically, it can explain why women are comparatively disadvantaged in terms of an equal opportunity for job entry, promotions, wages, schooling and on-the-job training programs (Blau and Ferber 1992; Kang and Shin 2001; Woolley 1993). Discrimination theories assume perfect substitution between women and men in production if women have the same educational qualification as men and if women are not subject to other discriminatory factors. Becker (1957), who conceptualised the tastes for discrimination model, asserted that discrimination occurs in the labour market when workers with equal production ability are treated differently because of personal prejudice or a discriminatory taste against associating with a particular group. In Becker's later

work (1993) other variables, including the degree of competition, are included as observable causes of discrimination in wages and employment.

Becker (1957) argued that the labour market actors, including employers, employees, customers, and governments, are likely to engage in market discriminatory behaviour based on their personal or institutional preferences. Therefore, people have preferences about who to hire, work with and be served by. Such discriminatory behaviours are subjective with little consideration for the positive relationship between wage and productivity alone. Regarding discrimination against women in the market, Becker provides a hypothetical explanation for the split between a public (male) and a private (female) sphere based upon biological determinism (Humphries 1998). In his later work (1985), Becker emphasised that for married women, the responsibilities for childcare and other household work are significant causes for gender differences in the labour market.

An employer who practices discrimination against women adopts obvious discriminatory actions in hiring and determining income levels (Becker 1957:31-2). It could be argued that such an employer wants to hire women at a lower wage, which ensures that women are paid less than their marginal product value, and to locate women in gender-stereotyping jobs. Additionally, although employers may not have a particular gender preference, employers are more likely to discriminate against women if their employees or customers have such discriminatory tastes. Situated in such a difficult circumstance, women are not expected to perform well in production. However, a gender-based occupational segregation created by employers

appears to conflict with the profit-maximising tendency of capitalism because employers would fail to reduce wage cost by hiring only men with higher wages in particular occupations. In this account, Becker (1957: 35-8, 1993) adds that capitalist competition plays an important role in reducing discrimination in the market.

On the other hand, discrimination caused by employees can often segment occupational structure, change a firm's wage structure, and make both discriminating and discriminated-against workers' productivity different (Bergman 1989, Blau and Ferber 1992:207). For instance, if male employees discriminate against their female colleagues, employers tend to situate each gender group in separated occupations in a firm. Meanwhile, where men and women work together in the same occupation, employers are likely to allocate men to higher positions and to pay a higher wage to them, compared to female workers. In addition, it is argued that the discriminatory tendency of male-dominated trade unions can also cause wage differentials by gender (Becker 1954; Cockburn 1992:44; Milkman 1987). Most of all, the negative impact on women's productivity resulting from men's discrimination in the market is significant. It is possible that women have a poor job performance if men refuse to cooperate with them by not sharing important job skills or information.

Finally, customer discrimination against women can be both a cause and result of occupational segregation and wage disparity by gender. Consumers who practice discrimination appear to choose a favoured group of workers to be served by particularly in the service sector and thus employers locate each gender group where they can match customers' tastes. For instance, specifically in accordance with

gender stereotypes, customers are more likely to feel more comfortable with male workers' service in terms of money, machinery, and knowledge-related jobs, whereas they prefer to be served by female workers in domestic-related jobs, such as teaching and nursing jobs (ILO 1997, Darity and Mason 1998, Yinger 1998). In sum, the tastes for discrimination model puts emphasis on labour market discrimination against women based on market actors' personal preferences for certain group members.

2.3.2 Statistical discrimination

The second type of discrimination theory in the labour market is called 'statistical discrimination'. Statistical discrimination is said to occur when employers, who seek to minimise hiring cost but maximise expected profit in a hiring process, judge workers not as individuals but on the basis of their group traits, for instance, within a category of gender or race (Arrow 1971; Phelps 1972:659-61; Sattinger 1998; Thurow 1975:170-1). The statistical research of Darity and Mason (1998) produced empirical evidence of employment discrimination by employers based on group traits, such as discrimination against women and African Americans in private firms of the United States, in terms of promotion, wage, and lay-off policies. In their study, imperfect labour market operation - specifically associated with the scarcity of information about the existence and characteristics of workers and jobs - is regarded as a major cause of discrimination. In other words, employers are likely to make the most preferred set of background characteristics of employees on a basis of different group traits and apply this preference to job applicants in hiring or managing workers.

Aigner and Cain (1977) examined Phelps' model (1972) measuring firms' imperfect observation on the result of a test measuring a worker's productivity or skill. They concluded that wage levels in firms are determined in accordance with employers' risk aversion, not by the test score which measured workers' future productivity. In other words, employers tend to avoid the risk of giving higher wages to individuals who are members of social minority groups, including females and non-white workers, who are perceived as having a poorer skill level or more frequent job mobility. On the other hand, Sattinger (1998) led a survey testing how workers' 'quit rate' could be related to wages in a group category. Despite the fact that the quit rates for potential workers cannot be accurately examined in a hiring process, firms divided workers into two groups, high- and low-quit rate workers and put an economic value on them. Surprisingly, the dividing device used by firms was not on the basis of individuals' characteristics or attitudes but on group membership. For instance, all workers belonging to a low-quit group, are treated equally regardless of the individual worker's trait. Therefore, the survey concluded that use of imperfect information in the labour market could be harmful for certain group members and, as a result, constituted economic discrimination.

Women are often less favoured in the hiring process because they are thought to perform relatively poorly in production compared to men due to time constraints, frequent quit rates, weaker physical strength and so forth (Blau and Ferber 1992; Sattinger 1998; Shin 2000). For employers, it could be difficult to judge who will or who will not be lifetime employees among female applicants and thus employers are more likely to see women as having an average level of the same female group traits based on gender stereotyping. As a result,

employers do not seem to hire women in positions requiring higher costs for replacement or job training. Although this selection practice appears to be rational for cost-minimising employers in the context of hiring, it is an obviously unfair treatment for women in job competition in the labour market.

However, impacts of statistical discrimination on discriminated-against groups could be severe when it produces 'feedback effect'. As discussed in the earlier section, 'feedback effect' can occur if women are less willing to increase their human capital because they know they are discriminated against based on their gender. Less human capital investment in education, training, and work skills can make women less productive and, as a result, they may continue to remain as a disadvantaged workforce in the labour market. It often happens that the vicious cycle of women's employment reinforces employers' discriminatory perception (Blau and Feerber 1992:210, Loury 1998). That is, if employers see women as a less competitive workforce, they tend to intensify their gender perception without thinking of the cause of it.

This type of discrimination could be discontinuous if the labour demand exceeds the labour supply of preferred groups or if employers see their potential profit reducing as a result of increasing wage costs for preferred workers. In this regard, employers' hiring behaviour based on applicants' group traits is seen as being irrational and in opposition to the market mechanism of competition. The fact that this theory is not consistent and includes explanations of discrimination relying on non-competitive and non-economic forces are considered as shortcomings of the theory in economics (Aigner and Cain 1977).

In sum, both discrimination theories, tastes for discrimination and statistical discrimination, suggest the possibility of irrational labour market operation because of personal discriminatory tastes or imperfect market information, and this has the contrasting implication to human capital theory. Meanwhile, despite the acknowledgment of gender difference in production because of non-market factors, the two discrimination theories discussed pay little attention to the fundamental gender element causing the difference between men and women. On the other hand, both theories admit to some difficulties in measuring individuals' taste for discrimination and the degree of imperfect market information that employers may have.

2.3.3 Dual labour market theory

Both tastes for discrimination and statistical discrimination are more likely to occur in the hiring process and have an individual or group-oriented approach. Dual labour market theory explains the causes of gender differences in the labour market in terms of organisational or institutional dual structures. The dual labour market economists suggest an institutional explanation for labour market segmentation by distinguishing 'primary' and 'secondary' sectors in the labour market (Gordon 1974; Piore 1971). The division of primary and secondary sectors could exist both inside and outside firms. According to Gordon, jobs in each primary and secondary market include the following characteristics are as follows.

- The primary market - higher wages, good working conditions, employment stability, better chance of

advancement, equity and due process in the administration of work rules.

- The secondary market - lower wages and fringe benefits, poor working conditions, high labour turnover, little chance of advancement, and often arbitrary and capricious supervision.

The distinctions between workers in the two sectors have the same comparative features as the jobs. Workers in the secondary labour market, compared to those in the primary market, tend to be worse off in terms of employment security, wages and opportunities for advancement and other working conditions. In contrast, workers in the primary sector have more market power and function more independently. At first, the dual labour market theory was used to explain the phenomena of urban poverty and underemployment, particularly focusing on racial discrimination in jobs and earnings (Gordon 1972:43-5).

In order to explain the historical separation between two markets and the differences between them, Piore (1977) suggests five connected arguments. First, he pointed out that employment stability, not job skills, is the most important characteristic distinguishing jobs between two sectors. Hence, workers with low reliability and the possibility of more intermittent career lifetime workforce participation are generally seen to remain in the secondary market. The second point is related to statistical discrimination, which simply assumes that employers prefer some workers with particular group traits and hence they are inclined to give a priority to those workers in the hiring process. Consequently, workers with certain group traits can be refused the opportunity to

get into a certain market because of employers' personal judgement on job applicants in terms of superficial group traits. In this case, workers' individual traits, such as the level of education and job skills, cannot be a significant screen device.

Third, Piore sees the distinction between the two sectors as determined historically, rather than technologically. Despite the different job characteristics between the two sectors, there are many kinds of jobs that can be performed in either sector with a similar level of technological skills. It is common that some jobs shift from the primary to the secondary sector through the market mechanism of subcontracting or outsourcing, because firms can reduce wage costs by doing so. The fourth point is the tendency that workers' behaviour traits continue to develop in the sector they belong to. This is a similar notion to the feedback effect discussed earlier. As a result, individuals, particularly secondary workers, are likely to make job changes only inside one sector while making little effort to shift to an alternative sector.

Finally, there are various historical forces that possibly reinforce the division of two sectors. Any government policies or legislation that are preferential to a certain sector can be critical in keeping the rigid border between the primary and secondary sectors. For instance, if a government provides an incentive for a job-training program or educational subsidy for the primary sector, employers should want to retain workers with stable work skills in the jobs as long as possible. The dual labour market theory sees that an institutional mechanism creates the occupational segmentation between two different sectors but there is little inter-sectoral mobility, resulting in sustaining the sectoral division of workers.

Applying the dual labour market model to women's employment, the concentration of female jobs is seen to be in the secondary market. For instance, Barron and Norris (1976:48) showed that women in Britain were clustered in particular occupations offering lower wages on average. Barron and Norris also underlined five main attributes of the workers in the secondary market. These are dispensability, clearly visible social differences, little interest in acquiring training, low economism and lack of solidarity.¹⁹ According to Barron and Norris, women were represented as one of the secondary worker groups because they, more than men, were likely to have these five attributes. Their assertion derived from the perception of women as a more flexible low-waged form of labour, secondary breadwinners in households, and more submissive to authority (Beechey and Perkins 1987:124).

Dualism in the labour market can be linked to 'the crowding hypothesis' (Keum 2002:109). This hypothesis proposes that discrimination discourages women from competing for jobs in the primary sector and, as a result, women have a tendency to crowd into the secondary market jobs. The proposed significant outcomes of this crowding effect are that a majority of women appear to be competing for only a limited number of jobs and, furthermore, over-competition seems to lower the wage levels of those jobs. Despite the lower wage levels of the jobs compared to those for male-crowded ones, some men still stay in female-crowded jobs because of wage differences between men and women in the same occupations. That is, men's average wage level is usually higher than that for women and men's higher wage is seen as a wage premium or a compensation for them working in female-crowded occupations.

Some researchers examining occupational segregation by gender have proved that a high degree of gender difference is persistently seen in the United States' labour market (Anker 1998; Oppenheimer 1970:64-75; Sokoloff 1980:42; Wootton 1997). Women's workforce participation has increased in order to meet the economy's demand and occupational distribution has changed over the course of the country's economic development. However, according to these researchers, a quantitative increase in women's workforce participation has not necessarily improved the quality of women's work. Although there have been substantial occupational shifts between men and women over time, occupational segregation has continued to exist in the US labour market to a great extent²⁰.

According to the data since the 1970s in the United States, occupations in which both men and women were participating appeared to be gender-differentiated in terms of organisations or workplaces (Reskin 1993). For instance, women were concentrated in the public sector, retail industry, and chains or franchises, whereas men were concentrated in the private sector, wholesale industry, and parent firms (Reskin and Roos 1990:10-6). Significantly, even within the same organisations, the employment status of women was more likely to be part-time, temporary, and on a contract basis. Moreover, it was normally seen that women were ranked lower than men in the male and female integrated jobs. For instance, a larger number of women were located not at executive and managerial levels but at their supportive levels (Wootton 1997).

The dual labour market theory is very useful for understanding occupational segregation by gender, and in particular, highlights the

existence of the labour market's structural dualism. However, this theory also encounters the same criticism that human capital theory incurs. In explaining gender differences in the labour market, the dual labour market theory embraces the assumption of the traditional gender division of labour without question. This theory fails to acknowledge non-labour market factors, specifically in relation to labour supply-side factors, and therefore fails to provide a comprehensive explanation for the original causes of gender differences in the labour market (Anker 1998; 20-2; Kang and Shin 2001:140-41; Sokoloff 63-4).

In addition, the dual labour market theory fails to include the notion of class struggle and the power relations between workers and management (Beechey and Perkins, 1987:135). It has been argued that the reason why the labour market is divided in two is because capitalists aim to maximise profit by enhancing labour market efficiency through segregating workers based on occupational hierarchy and dual labour market, so that employees are divided and ruled on the basis of their natural and social characteristics (Hartmann 1981; Korean Women's Institute 1999). The capitalist tactic, 'divide and rule', is a radical economists' notion and it is aimed to prevent workers from unionising and other attempts to challenge capitalists' power (Blau and Ferber 1992:216).

Finally, the dual segmentation theory does not provide a deep understanding of gender differences inside organisations with an integrated workforce. For instance, the theory has little explanation for vertical gender segregation between men in the higher-status positions and women in lower-status positions in the same workplaces. The types of occupational segregation, whether

horizontal or vertical, should be differentiated. Hakim (1978; 1979) says that horizontal segregation occurs in different types of occupations but tends to decrease in contemporary society because of the desegregation to some extent of each gender-dominated job. On the other hand, vertical occupational segregation appears in occupations where both men and women work and it seems to draw a hierarchical occupational line, men in higher positions and women in lower positions. Significantly, such a vertical segregation is more likely to be problematic because it occurs in the internal labour market and can cause conflict between workers.

2.3.4 Feminist/gender theories and related explanations

The human capital and the labour market discrimination theories are the major economic-oriented explanations for gender differences in the labour market. However, as discussed in the earlier section, the theories are seen as lacking consideration of non-economic factors, specifically gender relations, which are fundamental conditions for both men and women. Without understanding gender relations, it is difficult to comprehend a number of issues: why women have less education in many countries; why housework and childcare are primarily women's work; and why the tendency for men and women to enter sex-typed jobs exists in a labour market (ILO 1997). In this respect, gender-related theories provide useful ideological and historical explanations for the origin of gender differences in the labour market, as well as filling the gaps in previously discussed market-based theories.

A principal premise of gender theories can be understood in the context of Marxist feminists' arguments about the gender division of

labour at home and in the labour market. In accordance with Marxist theories of the labour market²¹, the early Marxist feminist theories (Costa 1972; Gardiner 1979; Gimenez 1997; James 1972; Humphries 1977; Mitchell 1972;) also called 'Marxist feminist theories of the home', promote the capitalist mode of production as a determinant of the social relations of both the labour market and the family. These theories point out the value and economic contribution of women's domestic work to capitalism. The theories promote the idea that women's labour in the home is related to consumption for family members, reproduction of the male breadwinner, and the production of housework and childcare. As a result, women's domestic work is seen to be economically necessary for the creation of profits in social production although it is not materially profitable. Thus, the material basis of women's inferior status gained by working outside the money economy determines women's disadvantaged place in the labour market.²²

In brief, according to the Marxist feminists' claims, the fact that women's work in the home is economically and ideologically valuable but hidden and unpaid lowers the value of their labour power in the market (James 1972:7). The poorly valued women's domestic labour in terms of money makes women a low-waged source of readily available workforce that can be employed in low-wage full-time or part-time jobs in response to the needs of capital. Moreover, they are seen to have little resistance to returning to non-paying domestic work when not needed by the market. As a result, women are seen to have greater flexibility and availability in the job market and this sustains the notion of women as an industrial reserve army of labour (Beechy 1978; Bruegel 1979; Chang 2001; Mitchell 1973: 29; Yanz and Smith 1983).

Therefore, the early Marxist feminists, including Zaretsky (1976:209-18) and Smith (1978:215), consider that capitalism is what determines the structure of the labour market and both class and gender inequality. Women's unpaid domestic labour, despite its economic importance as a tool of maintenance and reproduction for capitalism²³, is a crucial reason for women's low-waged and less powerful position in the labour market. In this regard, the early Marxist feminists paid little attention to patriarchy, although understanding its existence before the origin of class relationship and private property and its importance as a primarily ideological, but not material, mechanism operating the relationship within the family. That is, for Marxist feminists, what makes women economically dependent on men is capital, or class relations between workers, including both men and women, and owners of the means of production - not a patriarchal mode.

However, the later Marxist Feminists (Donovan 1985; Eisenstein 1979, 1981; Hartmann 1976, 1979; Jaggar 1983; Mies 1986) have a somewhat different analysis of the functions of capitalism and patriarchy affecting gender and labour relationship. Unlike the early Marxist Feminists, they see patriarchy as having significant effects in itself, as well as capitalism, in shaping women's status in both home and the market. It has been argued that patriarchy is both a material and ideological operation mode of men's and women's labour use and intertwined with capitalism, and thus gender division of labour in the home is a reason for gender division of production in the market. Therefore, women's disadvantaged place in both home and the market is the result of a synthesis of the social relations of the genders (patriarchy) and the social relations of classes (capitalism),

and this is also called the system of patriarchal capitalism (Shelton and Aggar 1993:33; Sokoloff 1980:198).

The proponents of patriarchal capitalism (Eisenstein 1979:22; Mies 1986:38) suggest that the gender-assigned nature of labour in the home and in the labour market makes women's major responsibility the home and family, even when they are working in the market. Therefore, existing gender roles are seen as mechanisms perpetuating patriarchy and capitalism. Hartmann (1979:11) singles out the effect of patriarchy on the relationship between men and women by defining it as 'a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men and enable them to dominate women'²⁴.

Hartmann (1979:207-8) argues that, before the introduction of capitalism, the patriarchal notion was primarily practised individually in the home through a hierarchical order, such as men's dominance over women or children but later, intertwining with capitalism, expanded to industry centres, including the labour market. Therefore, she concludes that patriarchal order became a major base for an industrial hierarchical relationship, which is critical for capitalists to maintain their power among men and between men and women by segregating the labour market. As a result, the gender segregation of the labour market is both cause and effect of women's problems in the market, since segregation is used as a mechanism to maintain men's superiority over women, particularly through lower wages for women. As a result of patriarchal relations in a capitalist society, the collective exploitation of women tends to benefit both working-class men and capitalists.

The later Marxist feminist theorists argued that men's collective exploitation of women in the labour market is achieved by maintaining the payment of the family wage to men only, male-centred policies in unions, and other forms of male benefits in the labour market as well as gender-segmented jobs (Cockburn 1991:108-12; Hartmann 1979:220, Milkman 1987; and Zaretsky 1978:211). Thus, these factors are seen as the major causes of women's low-waged and low status position in the labour market. Furthermore, these theorists point out that there is a mutual interaction among the social relations: with the domestic division of labour influencing the labour market, and the labour market influencing the home. That is, women's market labour also reinforces the gender-assigned roles in the home. This assertion shows clearly that the intertwined relationship between patriarchy and capitalism exists in both spheres of living, the home and the labour market.

All Marxist feminists, however, agree on the interconnected relationship of the gender division of labour in household and in paid work, which are critical to understanding women's disadvantaged market status. However, they have somewhat different approaches to the origin of the gender division of labour in both spheres of living. The early Marxist feminists see the nature of capitalism, which seeks to maximise profit and minimise costs, as a crucial cause of the gender division of labour and understand uneven gender relationship within the context of class conflict between capitalists and workers. However, they pay little attention to the existence of gender division of labour prior to the emergence of capitalism and to men's dominant power in both the home and the

labour market, resulting in working women's double burdens (Sokoloff 1980:194).

Taking these critical points into consideration, the theory of patriarchal capitalism is more likely to be powerful and inclusive of an understanding of women's disadvantaged market position (Sokoloff 1980:203-5). Sokoloff suggests 'the dialectical relations of women's work', which explains the dynamic interaction between patriarchy and capitalism in both home and market. According to her explanation, patriarchy and capitalism are not necessarily interacting in one direction. In other words, the two ideological concepts are seen to be reciprocally reinforcing, on one hand, and mutually contradictory, on the other hand. Women's dual work in both household and the labour market benefits both men and capital: their unwaged reproductive labour in a family unit creates surplus value for men and capital, and makes possible the maintenance of male dominance in both spheres of living. At the same time, women provide capital with a lower-waged reserve labour force.

On the other hand, Sokoloff (1980:210-1) points out the contradictory outcome emerging from the dynamic interactions between the two concepts. That is, women with economic power can demand more decision-making power and rights in the household and, as a result, they can challenge patriarchy in the home. In addition, a growing female labour force tends to make an effort to ensure gender equality in the market by participating in male-dominated labour unions and by demanding more legal protection (Cockburn 1991:67). Furthermore, the emergence of a female workforce may create labour force redundancy in the market and result in lowering wage levels

for both men and women. In this regard, patriarchy and capitalism are mutually conflicting in terms of women's work.

Nonetheless, feminists' explanations of the notion of gender division of labour are not simply based on biological or social grounds but include a deep understanding of ideological or cultural grounds rooted in the intertwined patriarchal capitalism (Elson and Pearson 1997). As a result, gender-role stereotypes, primarily established through the socialisation process²⁵, are important for both labour supply-side in choosing occupations, and demand-side in hiring workers. Such stereotypes may explain why girls are less likely to receive education than boys or why girls tend to learn skills relevant to housewife-extended jobs, while boys tend to acquire labour market skills. At the same time, the stereotypes also explain why the demand-side of labour has strong sex-typing preference for workers. Therefore, gender-related explanations suggest that occupational segregation by gender is closely related to the characteristics of 'female' and 'male' stereotypes (Fox and Hesse Biber 1984:94).

According to Anker and Hein's findings (1986) and Anker's later work (1997), there are three groups of common stereotypes (positive, negative and other) of women that have an effect on occupational segregation. First of all, the five positive stereotypes are a caring nature; skill and experience in household-related work; greater manual dexterity; greater honesty; and attractive physical appearance. These characteristics help women obtain occupations like nurse, doctor, social worker, maid, housekeeper, cleaner, cook, waiter, spinner, weaver, typist, salesperson, accountant (book-keepers), street vendor and shop assistant.

The five negative stereotypes are disinclination to supervise others; less physical strength, less ability in science and mathematics; less willingness to travel; and less willingness to face danger and to use physical force. Consequently, these traits have negatively affected women's acceptability in various occupations: manager, supervisor, government executive, officer, legislative official, construction worker, physical scientist, architect, engineer, statistician, transport driver, fire-fighter, police officer, and security guard. Finally, the three 'other' stereotypes consist of greater willingness to take orders, greater docility and less inclination to complain about work or working conditions, lesser inclination to join trade unions, greater tolerance of monotonous/repetitive work; greater willingness to accept lower wages and less need for income; and greater interest in working at home. These stereotypes are offered in explanation of why women have occupations with conditions of lower pay, higher flexibility, lower status, and less decision-making authority.

2.3.5 Patriarchal structures maintaining and reinforcing male dominance in paid work

Such gender stereotypes in the labour market inform systemic male dominance structured on the basis of two interacting systems, patriarchy and capitalistic mode of production (Beneria 1997; Cockburn 1991; Elson and Pearson 1997; Kabeer 2004; Kessler-Harris 2004; Pearson 1998; Walby 1990). This systemic male dominance is also seen as 'male bias' that operates in favour of men as a gender, and against women as a gender in markets (Elson 1991:3). There exist various hegemonic or dominant ideologies and cultural and religious systems underpinning male dominance or bias in a society (Cunnison and Stageman 1993:4; Kessler-Harris 2004; Lim 1990:105;

Walby 1990). In many countries, culture plays an enormous role in restricting work areas, determining what occupations women should be involved in, and how women should behave in paid work (Schech and Haggis 2000). For instance, Confucian culture in East Asia, including Korea and Japan, educates people to accept a hierarchical relationship between men and women at both household and community level so that discrimination by gender in labour markets is often taken for granted. Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson (1988:229) have argued that the cultural restrictions on women enable global capital to draw on the female labour force in female gender-stereotyping jobs.

In addition to culture, both formal and informal institutions in countries also account for women's unprivileged positions. On the one hand, family and education institutions with patriarchal tendencies reinforce gender biases and perpetuate the notion of inequality between men and women in the primary process of socialisation (Kessler-Harris 2004; Lim 1990; Park 1993; Wolf 1997). On the other hand, the state is a significant agent that upholds patriarchy in institutions through laws, regulations, policies and ideological pronouncements privileging men in both private and public spheres (Dahlerup 1992; Sasson 1986; Walby 1990:21). For example, legislation and policies in the patriarchal state usually neglect women's rights in terms of property, education, wage, and employment opportunity.

Meanwhile, gender relations can be invisible in economic policies (Elson 1991; Riphenburg 1996). In market oriented economies the state is both patriarchal and capitalistic and thus employs economic policies which disadvantage women in labour markets in both direct

and indirect ways (Cockburn 1991:8; Walby 1990). Many countries, particularly low-income countries, see the female workforce as a flexible and lower-wage industrial labour resource and thus make it easier for employers to utilise women's labour in the industries with high labour intensity. In most cases, these industrial productions in low-income countries are owned and operated by transnational corporations from high-income countries. This global capital's exploitation of women's labour in low-income countries is seen as the patriarchal nature of contemporary global capitalism (Lim 1983: 223; Mies 1986:4). In other words, workers' struggle is produced by a combination of the patriarchal power of global capitalists, who are usually white Western men, and the profit-maximising economic logic of capitalism. In market oriented economies with authoritarian governments, the state often uses authoritarian labour controls to maintain lower wage levels for women, largely by lowering minimum wage level and by oppressing trade union activities (Lee, O. J. 1993; Park 1993, 1995). This happened in Korea during its industrialisation period from the beginning of the second half of the 20th century until the late 1980s.

The worldwide labour exploitation of women in low-income countries' Export-Processing Zones (EPZs), defined as 'industrial zones with special incentives to attract foreign investment in which imported materials undergo some degree of processing before being exported again' is an example showing low-income states' hard controls on women (ILO 1998). Textiles, garments and electronics are the main businesses in EPZs, and they usually look for women workers, who are considered to be cost less, hard-working, easy to control, willing to accept tediousness and monotony and whose productivity in these jobs is higher than that of men (Kabeer 2004;

Lee 1985:40). EPZs have developed in many regions, emerging from the East Asian (including Korea and Taiwan) and Central American countries (including Nicaragua and Honduras) over decades. According to a report in 1998 from the International Labour Organisation (ILO 1998), EPZs are proliferating worldwide. There are over 850 of them, hiring approximately 27 million workers and as many as 90 per cent of the workforce are women. The same report put a special emphasis on the plight of women workers in EPZs. Women in the majority of EPZ workforces are said to suffer from problems, including 'the long working hours, low wages, the almost total absence of social welfare facilities (such as child care) and the often arduous nature of the work' (ILO 1998). Meanwhile, the male workforce in EPZs enjoys relatively better off positions, such as managers or skilled machine workers with higher wages.

On the other hand, women workers in more developed countries with high value-added and a service-led industrial structure have a different working environment from those in less developed countries. As a result of the industrial relocation, a great number of women in developed countries gave up their jobs in the manufacturing industry and have become unemployed or have left the labour market (Garnsey 1987:7). In many cases, women have been absorbed in the service and public sectors that are expanding as a result of the industrial diversification of a developed economy. The number of women who occupy professional or managerial positions grows larger due to their increasingly higher educational attainment. However, many women workers still tend to remain at the periphery of the labour market due to persistently existing asymmetric gender relations in a society. In recent decades, the higher-income state is more likely to facilitate flexible use of the workforce by making it

legally simple to dismiss workers and use casual types of workers, such as subcontracted, outsourced and temporary-contracted workers. Importantly, women are over-represented in these contingent jobs. Furthermore, women are more likely to be crowded in the informal sector, in which wages and conditions of work are worse than those of the formal sector regardless of changes in economic conditions (Baden 1993; Beneria 2001; Sen 1987).

Finally, the gender division of labour in paid work is sustained through exclusion and segregation, prohibiting women from getting certain jobs and positions (Cunnison and Stageman 1993:14; Walby 1990). The gender relations become competitive in workplaces. Men may see their share fall if women gain more. Thus, male workers tend to maintain their dominance by excluding and segregating women from the mainstream of the power structure. Trade unions have been an important mechanism for men to do this. Trade unions, like workplaces, are male-dominated and have historically given priority to the interests of their male members (Cockburn 1991; Hartmann 2002). Skilled manual workers, usually with full-time positions, have an active participation in trade unions and workers in managerial levels are represented in important decision-making process. Therefore, women can be easily excluded from trade union membership, particularly the decision-making committees and councils that govern unions because a majority of women are segregated in unskilled jobs and excluded from those managerial and full-time positions (Choi, S. A. 2000:270; Cockburn 1991:110). Additionally, the masculinity of the trade union culture, including aggressiveness, competitiveness, and frequent visits to pubs and clubs after work, discourage women from participating in unions to a great extent (Cunnison and Stageman 1993).

2.4 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter has examined the explanations for gender differences in the labour market with close attention to men as a privileged and women as an underprivileged workforce. Differences in the monetary value of their labour and occupational distribution, largely represented as women crowded in less well-paying and less-important jobs, are significant outcomes of the hierarchical relationship between men and women in a society. The human capital theory suggests that women take up an inferior status in paid work due to the characteristics of their human capital, specifically regarded as, compared to men, being less productive and less beneficial to employers and industrial families with the profit-maximising tendency. The theory considers that women inevitably have fewer chances to improve their human capital, including education, job experience, and work-related training, than do men because of women's traditional motherly and wifely roles in households. However, the critical shortcoming of the theory emerges from the fact that market actors' discriminatory employment practices against women are largely taken for granted. Moreover, the theory takes the traditional gender division of labour for granted and does not consider it as a major cause of gender inequality in employment.

Opposing the human capital theory, two sets of non-rational market approaches have been explored in this chapter. The first set is three labour market discrimination theories with economic origin, tastes for discrimination theory, statistical discrimination theory, and dual

labour market theory. These theories argue that gender differences in the labour market are mainly created by labour market actors' (including employers, government, individuals) or labour institutions' discrimination against women. These theories make a contribution to acknowledging that non-rational market or imperfect market operation by individuals or the labour market causes gender disparity in employment. However, similar to the human capital theory, these theories also have a common assumption that women are a secondary workforce. This assumption is based on the traditional gender relations but it lacks consideration of the origin and formation of men and women's different gender roles and identity.

The second non-rational market approach based on gender-related explanations has been presented in order to explore ideological and historical origins of gender differences, filling the gaps in the previous economic-oriented theories. Different groups of feminist theories, the early Marxist feminist theories and the later Marxist feminist theories have informed the formation of an asymmetric gender relationship in both home and production. In explaining gender difference in the labour market, the early feminist theories consider the concepts of patriarchy and capitalism separately, but the later feminist theories emphasize an interaction between capitalism and patriarchy. Nonetheless, these groups of feminist scholars agree on the interconnected relationship of gender division of labour between household and paid work, which is critical to understanding women's underprivileged employment status.

Patriarchy-based gender stereotypes in the labour market inform systemic male dominance or bias structured on the basis of two

interacting systems, patriarchy and a capitalistic mode of production. Male dominance or bias is underpinned by political, economic and cultural systems that also privilege men in terms of power and value. Asymmetric gender relations in paid work are seen as being shaped and reinforced by religious and cultural norms as well as a flexible world system for production. Significantly, family and education institutions with patriarchal tendencies reinforce gender biases and perpetuate the notion of inequality between men and women in the primary process of socialisation. Moreover, the state is seen as an important agent that upholds patriarchy in institutions through laws, regulations, policies and ideological pronouncements privileging men in both private and public spheres. Therefore, systemic male dominance in the labour market in line with the ruling ideologies and institutions in a society produces gender differences through exclusion and segregation, making it difficult for women to obtain jobs, positions, monetary compensation, and organisational power as equally as men.

In conclusion, this chapter indicates that the causes of gender differentiation in paid work are to be focused not only in market contexts but also in non-market contexts. The reason for this situation is that the phenomenon of gender differentiation in work is produced by systematic male dominance supported by the major political, economic, and social institutions of society, notably, the state, the work organisation, the family, and the educational system. In these institutions, patriarchy and a capitalistic mode of production are hegemonic ideologies determining gender roles and division of labour. Assuming that women are the secondary workforce offering a flexible temporary form of labour in paid work, the members in these institutions (including the state, employers, and family

members) are less in favour of women for human capital investment and the primary market jobs. Hence, this attitude significantly causes gender differentiation in paid work. The labour market analysis with gender perspectives in this chapter, as well as the next chapter examining gender impacts of crisis-affected countries' employment adjustment, offers profound explanations for the gendered process of Korea's employment transformation, especially during the post 1997 crisis period.

Notes

¹⁵ The seven countries include Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United States.

¹⁶ The studies of feminisation of the workforce in developing capitalist countries, particularly in export-driven manufacturing factories, are found in the work of Beneria and Sen (1986), Elson (1991, 1996), Elson and Pearson (1984), Lim (1983, 1990), Mies (1986), Park (1993), and Pearson (1992).

¹⁷ Becker (1993) has argued that in recent decades changes in family conditions, including the decline in family size and the growth in divorce rates, and the rapid expansion of the service sector, where most women are employed, as well as increased equal rights legislation has encouraged women to increase investment in market-oriented skills resulting in improving working conditions for women.

¹⁸ This concept is relevant to the explanation of statistical discrimination, which will be discussed in the following section.

¹⁹ The definition of dispensability is the ease with which an employee can be removed from a redundant job. Social differences of the secondary group, identified with relative inferiority, are used to justify the social division of occupations. The social division based upon gender is prevailing in the labour market, as well. The degree of training acquired determines the quality of human capital. The secondary workers are perceived as attaining a low level of job training, and employers make no effort to improve their skills either. Economism is measured by the degree of job value or monetary reward that workers put an emphasis on. The secondary groups are regarded as having less concern with pay. Finally, solidarity explains whether workers want to participate in collective organisations, such as trade unions. (Barron and Norris 1976:54-64)

²⁰ Anker (1998:262-3) identified nine female and eight male occupations typically held by men and women in some industrial countries. Nine common female jobs are nurses; teachers; stenographers or typists; bookkeepers, cashiers and related workers; salespersons, shop assistants; cooks, waiters, bartenders; maids and

related housekeeping service workers; hairdressers, barbers, beauticians and related workers; tailors, dressmakers, sewers and upholsterers. On the other hand, eight typical 'male' occupations are architects; engineers and related technicians; legislative officials and government administrators; managers, sales supervisors and buyers; protective service workers; production supervisors and general foremen; blacksmiths, tool-makers, bricklayers, carpenters and other construction workers. Anker's study on segregated jobs by gender will be further discussed in later gender-related feminist theories in relation to 'gender stereotypes'.

²¹ The classic work of Karl Marx is further developed by mid twentieth century Marxist theories of monopoly capital, which asserts monopoly capitalism is the causal factor explaining the disadvantaged position of women in the modern labour market. According to those theorists, women are conceived to be waged labourers in the system of creating and realising surplus for capitalists. Within this context, women act as a cheap source of labour for the expanding capitalist system and this notion is supported by two basic explanations. First, with the help of machinery, particularly in the sectors where men's strong physical strength was used, capitalists could see the increase of productivity with less labour power. In this regard, capitalists preferred to employ women and children, a physically weaker form of labour force, in place of men because both women and children were considered to be more docile and less organised. A second plausible explanation of women's cheaper labour is the less cost for reproduction of their labour power based on the idea that it is cheaper to reproduce women's daily existence than men's, for example, women ate lesser and were expected to have fewer luxuries than men (Beechy 1977:56-7; Hartmann 1979:214; McDonough and Harrison 1978:11-41; Sokoloff 1980:75-6).

²² Dalla Costa (1972) and James (1972) argued that women's domestic labour is productive of both value and surplus value and thus makes capitalism sustainable. They are the major supporters of 'wages for housework' (see also Gardiner et al., 1975; Secombe 1974; Smith 1978; and Walby 1986).

²³ Due to the capitalist mode of mass production, women's family commodity-making activities, such as making clothes, processed food, soap, and candles, became unnecessary. Instead, women turned out to be the major consumers in the market and, at the same time, became waged-workers producing the same commodities they used to make at home (Gardiner 1979:180-1; Sayer and Walker 1992:44). However, women's roles involving 'production of the producer' in households still retain important parts of domestic labour, including biological reproduction (childbearing) and generational reproduction (childrearing) and daily reproduction or maintenance (provision of human needs like food and shelter) (Pearson 1992:229). Pearson emphasises that this reproduction is vital for any production process to continue in the future.

²⁴ Walby (1986:50-9) claims that patriarchal relations are found in the state as well as in the household and the labour market. According to her, in order to maintain a capitalist mode of production, the state acts as capitalists by shaping patriarchal relations in a society in a variety of ways, for instance, by supporting a form of household in which wives provide unpaid domestic services for husbands.

²⁵ According to Marini and Brinton (1984), determinants of gender stereotypes are family influence including differential treatment of boys and girls by parents and parental role models, social influences including availability of same-sex role models, gender stereotypes in educational materials, counselling and career guidance, tracking and vocational education and training in Mathematics and

Science, legislation and governmental intervention related to education, mass media effects, and early work experience (Blau and Ferber 1992).

3. Crisis-affected countries' employment adjustment in the process of the neo-liberal economic restructuring

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the gendered impact of recession and neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programs²⁶ (SAPs) in crisis-affected countries, with special attention to employment outcomes. The ways workers and employers respond to recessionary conditions and SAPs vary with their national, industrial, technological, trade union, public policy and family circumstances. Many analyses of the impacts of post crises recession and adjustment have presented a gender dimension of employment changes (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2000; Baden 1993; Chant 1996; Elson 1991; 1994; Riphenburg 1996). The central stance of their analyses is that the hardships of recession and adjustment are unequally distributed between men and women and between classes. In line with this view, this chapter argues that economic contraction brought on by crises and the SAPs-based policies on downsizing and flexibilisation of the workforce have a more negative employment impact on women than on men.

The argument in this chapter relies on the view that economic crises transform gender relations by simultaneously reinforcing and undermining social patriarchy or male dominance over female at the social level through the exclusion and segregation of women from occupations, especially those with high status and wages (Humphries 1976; ILO 1998b; Shin 2001). As a result, women are more likely than men to be discouraged from remaining in the labour

market during the post crisis recession and adjustment period. In many cases, women's role as a family caretaker is highlighted to a great extent if their male household head faced unemployment and women are often urged to look for jobs to meet their family needs. Nonetheless, the women that do remain in the workforce or who newly enter the labour market to support their family in financial difficulties often have no other choice but to accept comparatively underprivileged jobs offering a low-level of employment security and benefits. These employment changes were evident in the post 1997 crisis in Korea, as well as in many other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America that have experienced a crisis (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2000).

Neo-liberal macroeconomic policies emphasise trade liberalisation of goods and services and of capital, privatisation of state-owned enterprises, cuts in government spending and reductions in real wages (Baden 1993; Jackiewicz 1999; Ratnam 1996). Moreover, flexible operation in both production and consumer markets is considered to be one of the most appropriate survival strategies for corporations. As a result, the business trend of subcontracting, outsourcing or local franchising prevails in both international and domestic industrial regions (ILO 1998b). Therefore, keeping the enhancement of labour market efficiency as a major principle in mind, employers are allowed to increase flexibility in industrial relations and labour utilisation in terms of the numerical and the functional. Increases in downsizing and out-sourcing, changes in work organisation, skill requirements, and transformations in the composition of the workforce from regular to non-regular forms of employment are significant consequences of the neo-liberal oriented labour market reform (Beneria 1999, 2001; Betcherman et al. 2001;

Elson 1996). Non-regular forms of employment include casual or temporary workers, part-timers, sub-contracted and out-sourced workers.

However, important drawbacks of this efficiency-driven labour arrangement appear in the erosion, to a certain extent, of workers' rights and benefits (Campbell 2001; Elson 1996:37; Standing et al. 1996:7-8). Importantly, labour flexibility is often associated with the feminisation of labour because women's relationship to paid work has traditionally presented the characteristics of flexibility, given that societal norms tend to delineate different economic and social roles for men and women (Henson et al. 1988:10). The association between flexibilisation and feminisation appears more visible when crisis-affected countries adapt hastily to the neo-liberal market operation by making it easier for employers to dismiss workers and reduce the size of the workforce without paying much attention to equal employment policies (Elson 1991; Rippenburg 1996; Standing 1999). This assertion is relevant to the discussion in the previous chapters which concluded that such gender differentials in employment are caused by a combination of economic factors (that is, non-gender neutral economic policies and changing economic opportunities) socio-cultural factors (that is, patriarchal societal norms perceiving men as family breadwinners and primary workers in the labour market).

Given existing research on gender dynamics, Haddad and others point out that it is perhaps inevitable that the study of adjustment has a gender dimension (1995). Not surprisingly, the studies on the gender impact of employment adjustment in post 1997 Korea have suggested that the financial upheaval had different impacts on

women and men in employment (Cho 2000a, 2000b; Kang 1998; Kim 2001; Kwun 2000; Park 1998; Shin 2001; Song 1999). These studies also take the view that a combination of economic and non-economic factors produced the gendered pattern of employment changes in Korea.

The next section of this chapter examines the nature of the neo-liberal SAPs implemented in the crisis-affected countries, followed by a criticism of the SAPs. The third section then looks into the characteristics and trends of the neo-liberal labour market policies. This section also considers the shortcomings of employment adjustment based on the neo-liberal labour approach. The fourth section of this chapter explains the gender impacts of recession and the neo-liberal employment adjustment in crisis-affected countries' economic restructuring process. The fifth and final section of this chapter discusses three theories predicting changes in women's employment in the post crisis economic restructuring period. These theories are used to explain the Korean case in chapter 5.

3.2 Global capitalism and the neo-liberal structural adjustment programs (SAPs)

In the process of intensification of global restructuring in recent decades, the neo-liberal capitalist market mechanism has become more dominant in many parts of the world (Gill 2000:53; MacEwan 1999:27-9). This neo-liberal economic approach intensifies free-market capitalist competition based on free flows of transnational capital and production. On the other hand, the neo-liberal market principle is largely formed and reinforced by the perspectives and

interests of dominant state apparatuses in the combined government of the Group of Seven (G-7) countries and the International Financial Institutes (IFIs) including the IMF and the World Bank (Khor 1999). Therefore, it is said that the primary agents of globalisation of capital and production are 'large, oligopolistic companies (including institutional investors in the financial markets), as well as major capitalist states responding to changing economic pressures' (Gill 2000:51).

The important role of the state is to ensure its market competition by attracting investment and by keeping skills and technologies within its jurisdictions. In this respect, it is seen that the accountability of state policy is subordinated to the power of market forces and to the mobilisation of capital (Cox 2000:28; Gill 2000:54). As a result, the state must act as a market actor itself, which puts economic activities into the market, not taking activities out of the market. Guy Standing (1989) asserted that the goal of "rolling back the State" is focusing on rewarding merit and combining fiscal reform with minimalist rather than "redistribute" welfare state; poverty alleviation and universal social security are no longer priority issues. Furthermore, Standing argued that the state put an emphasis on labour market deregulation and the erosion of union strength, weakening both employment security legislation and customary practices preserving job security. In countries, including developing countries, governments are urged to take steps to make it easier for employers to discharge workers or downsize their workforce and abolish or weaken minimum wage legislation and institutional safeguards, on the ground that such wages reduce employment (Standing 1989).

The neo-liberal economic orthodoxy is the basis of structural adjustment strategies and stabilisation policies in many parts of the world (Ratnam 1996). Some countries, mostly OECD countries, are likely to make a rather smooth transition to the world system of free market, but others, for the most part lower income countries, are not. The ones who fail to survive from either goods or capital markets' competition appear to fall into internal or external shock. It has been argued that free and rapid flow of global capitals and more frequent changes in individual countries' interest rate and exchange rate make international goods and financial markets increasingly volatile and uncertain (Chung 2001; Krugman 1998). Countries with weak economic fundamentals, including the lack of appropriate fiscal and monetary supervision, too high short-term capital inflows, and weak corporate governance, are seen as having the problems of high debt ratio and severe current account deficit. It has been also argued that some foreign short-term funds, making profits from speculative attacks on emerging-market countries, are one of the causes of the currency crises (Bello 1999; Khor 1999). As a result, many of these countries fall into a balance of payment or currency crisis²⁷. In addition, those crises tend to affect other countries, particularly neighbouring emerging-market countries, which have trade and financial linkages with an original crisis-affected country (Ito 2000:80). Joseph Stiglitz, a critic of neo-liberalism argued: 'Contagion has also played an important role in spreading and magnifying the current crisis, putting pressure even on fundamentally strong economies as nervous investors moved money out of emerging markets throughout the world'²⁸ (*New York Times*, 31 October 1997:A19).

Crisis-affected countries usually face sharp and sudden depreciation of their currencies and, consequently, have difficulties paying back foreign debts. Many of these countries approach IFIs, specifically the IMF, for financial assistance (Ratnam 1996; Stiglitz 1998; Zaki 2001). The IMF's financial rescue package is offered to the troubled countries on condition that they stabilise the macroeconomic problems and restructure their macroeconomic conditions in accordance with the SAPs included in the package. According to one study examining the number of currency and balance of payments crises based on the panel data set from 1970 to 1997, 160 crises occurred and 67 countries participated in the IMF stabilisation programs during the time period (Hutchison 2001). These countries are mostly developing capitalist countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The major objectives of the SAPs are first to stabilise the crisis-affected countries' macro-economic environment and second to sustain their long-term economic growth. The major policies include currency devaluation, drastic cuts in government spending and employment, higher interest rates, market deregulation, embracing labour and capital markets, and liberalisation of trade and foreign investment (Ratnam 1996; Zaki 2001).

However, the SAPs are often criticised for failing to address an individual country's different needs, thereby creating a range of economic, social, and political problems (Burkett and Hart-Landsberg 1998; Ratnam 1996; Sachs 1998; Zaki 2001). The major criticism of the SAPs lies in the fact that the programs are unlikely to meet their original macro-economic goals but are likely to aggravate long-term stagnation, widen inequalities, and deepen poverty in crisis-affected countries. A fiscal policy of austerity in the SAPs,

largely through cutbacks in government spending, is implemented to reduce the inflation rate but, at the same time, the policy leads to a decline in real wage levels and arise in unemployment, which generally translate into greater income inequality. This was the case for Africa, South Asia, and Latin America in the 1980s as well as countries affected by the 1997 crisis (Bello 2001).

Another significant critique of the SAPs has emerged in relation to the social costs of adjustment and their gender dimensions (Beneria 1999:690). Atinc and Walton argued, 'One key area that is essential policy making and about which too little is known is the gender aspect of the crisis' (1998:16). Based on empirical studies documenting different aspects of the harder and longer-than-expected social costs of adjustment, feminist critiques pointed out ways in which the hardships of adjustment were unequally distributed on the basis of gender, as well as class position²⁹. Macroeconomic concepts, the basis of the neo-liberal SAPs, look at the economy as a whole rather than individual firms or households (Bakker 1994:8). The macroeconomy assumes that the individual is both a commodity and a rational economic person in determining the level and the pattern of economic activity and allocation of human resources in response to economic demand. This assumption is the same as that for human capital theory. However, in the previous chapter the neo-classical economic view of a rational choice-theoretic logic on women and work is seen fundamentally unable to explain gender differentials in the labour market because it lacks knowledge of gender relations in the labour market. Elson argued,

Macro-economics is male-biased. It is not that macro-policy reforms are deliberately designed to favour men. ... the key

issue is that macroeconomics has a one-side view of the macro economy: it considers only the monetary aggregates of the “productive economy”. It ignores the human resource aggregates of the “reproductive economy”, the indicators of population, health, nutrition, education, and skills. This one-sided view of the macroeconomy is a male biased view, because the sexual division of labour means that women are largely responsible for the “reproductive economy” as well as contributing a great deal of effort to the “productive economy” (1994:42).

Therefore, empirical research has suggested that the austerity programs and shrinking household budgets increase women’s responsibilities for domestic work and reproductive work. In addition, lower real wages and unemployment force new household members, mostly women who usually have relatively lower participation rates and lower-value of labour, to participate in the paid workforce, often under the precarious conditions of the informal sector (Beneria 1999:691). For instance, Chant (1996) examined women’s roles in recession and economic restructuring in the Philippines in the early 1980s. In her research, she showed that many women in economic need faced a difficulty in finding formal sector jobs and had to create or expand informal home-based activities such as making and selling food or doing piecework for industrial firms. Chant also found that women, who already had work, increasingly had additional work, known as a sideline, and women’s sidelines became an exceedingly common response to a deepening crisis for years.

Moreover, in analysing the gender dimensions of the crisis impact, feminists have also stressed that pre-existing social constraints which make it difficult for women to have an equal access to resources might hinder effective re-allocation of resources and success of the SAPs (Beneria 1999; Riphenburg 1996). For example, Riphenburg's empirical work on Zimbabwe at the beginning of the SAPs in 1990 has shown that the department of Social Welfare in the country gave the food financial assistance directly to household heads assumed to be male (1996). Riphenburg argued, 'This may obstruct women's access to assistance from the programs as the money may not necessarily be spent on household consumption need' (1996:202). In addition, women also had limited access to health assistance because the department required them to bring their husband's wage slips to gain exemption from health charges. This became problematic when husbands were reluctant to show their wage slips to their wives. As a result, Riphenburg argued, 'the perpetuation of male bias is not just a distributional issue of injustice rooted in inadequate information or individual bias but exists in the economic theories and within the institutional structures of markets and public sector institutions themselves' (1996:199).

Evidence from many crisis-affected countries has also demonstrated the different employment effects of recession and structural adjustment between men and women (Baden 1993; Beneria 1999; Chant 1996; Elson 1991; ILO 1998a). Based on evidence from debt crises in Africa and Latin America in the 1980s, Aslanbeigui and Summerfield (2000) claimed that stabilisation and structural adjustment programs were not gender neutral. In addition, the emphasis on efficiency and profits in these policies reinforced the already existing biases. They said,

Women gained less when reforms were successful and lost more when policies did not produce the expected positive results. They were laid off at higher rates compared to men and were passed over in the privatisation of business and the assignment of property rights. Women were overrepresented among the poor and disproportionately affected by cuts in health care and education expenditures, and worked harder and longer than previously to provide for their families when real wages eroded (2000:85-6).

Examining social consequences of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, Atinc and Walton asserted, 'Though gender inequality is not a new problem in the region, the crisis situation has exacerbated the difficulties faced by poor women and girls in East Asia' (1998:16). In his study on the Asian economic crisis, class, and patriarchy in Korean society, Shin (2001) argued that the crisis reinforced social patriarchy, that is, male dominance over female at the social level through the exclusion of women from the labour market. However, he also argued that the crisis undermined familial patriarchy in Korea in line with the evidence showing that housewives in families with reduced or no family income due to their husband's unemployment or wage cuts entered the workforce in order to overcome their family's economic difficulties. Nevertheless, they were confined to the secondary labour market with low wages and dead-end careers at that time. The next two sections look specifically into labour issues, including the characteristics and outcomes of the neo-liberal flexible labour market approach and the gender impact of the SAPs-based employment adjustment in crisis-affected countries.

3.3. Characteristics and trends of neo-liberal labour market policies

In a flexible labour market, employment restructuring can take place without obstacles, social conflict, or mass unemployment (Standing et al. 1996: 6). Flexible labour arrangements, the principal concept of neo-liberal labour market operation, can be divided into two categories, functional and numerical (Cook 1998; Elson 1996; Lee, J. S. 2002; Uzzi and Barsness 1998). Firms choose to enhance functional flexibility in their labour use when they face an increased demand for a particular service or technology to be used in a particular place or time. Thus, workers are trained to acquire different job skills or expertise that are costly to develop internally or maintain if used only occasionally by the firms (Uzzi and Barsness 1998). Functional flexibility is thus flexibility in terms of task. It is seen as a labour system which uses the internal workforce efficiently in meeting the demands of business. Functional flexibility causes little employment change in terms of hiring and dismissing. This is also called internal flexibility, and is commonly used in Germany and Japan.

On the other hand, labour arrangements on the basis of numerical or external flexibility aim to utilise the workforce more easily in response to uncertain market demands, primarily through dismissal of redundant workforce, wage moderation, and cutting-down of working hours. Specifically, numerical flexibility can be largely explained by two concepts, employment and wage flexibility (Standing et al. 1996:6-7). Employment flexibility is the capacity of employers to change employment, particularly to lay-off workers quickly and easily without any problem. In order to facilitate easier staffing arrangements, including hiring and dismissing, employers

tend to prefer flexible types of workers, who presumably cost less, are more adaptive and responsive to changes in uncertain economic conditions, and cause fewer labour disputes. This is largely because flexible forms of workers (called non-regular, atypical, non-standard, or casual workers) who are employed on part-time, short-term fixed, seasonal, or daily basis cannot enjoy the comprehensive employment benefits and rights that are given to regular workers (Houseman and Polivka 1998; Smith 1997; Uzzi and Barsness 1998). While a great degree of employment flexibility is expected to enhance efficiency for employers, easy hiring and dismissing practices may hinder employers from making more rational decisions, and discourage both employers and employees to invest in firm-specific skills, embracing productivity-enhancing loyalty (Standing et al. 1996:6-7).

Next, wage flexibility is important in promoting restructuring. Reduction in wage costs diminishes the employers' burden in the process of restructuring. However, labour market reform stemming from changes in wage differentials between sectors or between occupational groups or workers with different employment status can generate more income inequality. Additionally, a wide wage gap may discourage marginalised groups of workers from having more commitment to their work (Smith 1997; Standing et al. 1996: 6-7; Cornia et al. 1987). Nevertheless, labour arrangements focusing on numerical flexibility, largely supported by the United States and the United Kingdom, has been predominantly implemented in most of the countries in the process of structural adjustment, including Korea and other 1997 crisis-affected countries. This is because numerical flexibility in labour arrangements seems to engender more effective outcomes in the short term, including a reduction in firms' labour costs by downsizing the workforce, and an increase in efficient

labour utilisation in response to economic structural changes. Therefore, it could be seen that changes in external market conditions, including internationalised production and consumer markets have had a direct influence on labour arrangements in terms of capital labour contracts, working conditions, the organisation of production, employee training, and wage structures.

The major changes that have occurred in the nature of employment (specifically in the United States) in response to such macro foundations can be summarised by seven categories as follows (Beneria 2001). First, employment activities have shifted from 'core' to 'periphery', that is, to smaller firms and independent contractors, including outsourcing and subcontracting firms (Dicken 1998; Smith 1997; Standing 1991). The drive towards leaner production and minimising of the workforce has become more important in global competition in order to lower production costs. Thus, reduction in the size of firms has been accompanied by the continuous downsizing of the workforce through the dismissal of workers for managerial reasons little related to their job performance (Capelli 1999).

Second, the previous trend of downsizing of the workforce in firms has also significantly shifted internal labour market tendencies, especially in the dismantling of hierarchical levels inside core firms. This is one of a few internal labour market outcomes represented by the tendencies for less importance to be placed on merit, age-based seniority and other promotional factors, the disappearance of middle management and the prevalence of teamwork arrangements. Moreover, the division of workers in terms of job quality or skill levels has become more apparent. For instance, more important or

high skill jobs tend to be concentrated in core firms while less important or low skill jobs seem to transfer to outside the core, such as outsourcing or subcontracting firms (Jokes 1995).

Third, the growing division between more and less privileged jobs has notably expanded contingent forms of employment, resulting in an increase in employment instability for individual workers (Davis-Blake and Uzzi 1993; Houseman and Polivka 1998; Smith 1997). Especially, less important, low-skilled jobs have increasingly become contingent. There are many ways to identify contingent jobs in different regions, including non-permanent, atypical, casual, non-standard, or non-regular. A regular contract of employment could be best understood as a contract for an indefinite term. The alternative appears to be full-time, part-time, daily, outsourced, or subcontracted employment with a temporary, fixed-term contract or sometimes without any written contract (Campbell and Burgess 2001; Hipple 2001). In particular, the expansion of tertiary sector activities, particularly lower-paying and less-skilled jobs, accounts for the increasing trend of contingent forms of employment. Moreover, this non-regularisation process is linked to the high growth of the informal sector, consisting of largely low return, low productivity activities catering to low-income consumers (Baden 1993; Beneria 2001; Elson 1996; Sen and Grown 1987).

Fourth, the processes of informalisation and decentralisation of the labour market have disturbed employment stability and security to a large extent. That is, workers are exposed to the constant threat of dismissal so that the labour market has great tendencies for job turnover, unemployment, and underemployment (Houseman and Polivka 1998). Fifth, these tendencies have polarised workers in

terms of income level and employment opportunity. This polarisation is usually seen to occur based upon differences of individual workers' education or skill levels, location of production, income levels of countries, and group traits of workers. Recent studies of the US labour market have demonstrated that vicious cycles of inequality among workers continue. While more privileged workers have enjoyed constant wage growth and job promotion, less privileged workers have mostly suffered from precarious job situations, including high job turnovers and demotion to lower ranked position (Uzzi and Barsness 1998).

Sixth, there have been profound changes in workers' attitudes toward workplaces and to the working environment. Expansion of contingent job contracts and more frequent movement in and out of the workforce have created unstable labour situations so that workers have less commitment and less loyalty to their firms (Smith 1997). Thus, the culture of lifetime work experiences and attachment to a specific firm has gradually disappeared. Seventh, finally, firms have shown some conflicting employment phenomena, that is, coexistence of recruitment and dismissal of workforce at the same time. The flexible labour arrangements have enabled firms to utilise their workforce more efficiently in response to their business demand. However, they have also created a capital-orientated work value system and thus employers need to offer greater monetary compensation to maintain the best-qualified workers in the firms.

In sum, flexibilisation and decentralisation of the workforce have certain negative impacts on employment. Impacts include a decline in employment security and stability represented by more frequent job turnovers, higher levels of unemployment and

underemployment, and deepening of the division of workers between the primary (or core) and secondary (or periphery) sector. The existing dual division of labour is more noticeable as a result of the deepening of the division between regular and non-regular forms of employment and between core and subcontracted or outsourced firms. In addition, the scattered workforce results in a dismantling of union power. As a result, vicious cycles of employment inequality in terms of income levels and employment opportunities rigidly continue in the flexible labour market (Cook 1998). In these circumstances women have emerged as desirable employees because of the flexible tendency of their paid work (Jenson et al. 1988:10). In the next section impacts of crisis and structural adjustment on individuals in employment, specifically within the gender context, in the periods of recession and economic restructuring will be discussed.

3.4 Gender impact of recessions and employment adjustment following crises

During the periods of post crises recession and restructuring, labour markets are subject to contraction on the whole, accompanied by long-term tendencies of deregulation, casualisation and the erosion of workers' rights and benefits (Chant 1996; Standing 1989). However, the evidence of many crisis-affected countries has suggested different employment effects of recession and structural adjustment between men and women (Baden 1993; Beneria 1999; Chant 1996; Elson 1991; ILO 1998). In general, there are two main factors affecting their dissimilar response to crisis in nature and magnitude (Chant 1996). The first element concerns the economic

context in which crisis and the SAPs take place, which is related to changing economic opportunities. The immediate impact of crisis is shown in different ways depending on a country's industrial or sectoral development stage (Baden 1993; Goodman et al. 1993; Goodman 1994; Humphries 1988). The second impact concerns the social factors and cultural views shaping the common gender norm, including their particular roles, welfare and relationships at the household level, and gender equality in employment practices pertaining to individual countries. While the former main factor influences the demand for women's paid work, the latter shapes supply-side conditions, including pressures and constraints, for potential and actual female workers (Humphries 1988:17).

Baden (1993) pointed out the inherent conceptual and methodological difficulties in trying to separate the effects of adjustment from those of recession. For example, the length and nature of the pre-adjustment economic crisis and the timing and phasing of the implementation of the SAPs are all interlinked factors, which make systematic comparison difficult. In addition, the major methodological problem roots from lack of separate time series of gender-desegregated employment and workforce activity data for many countries. Given the difficulties, Baden concluded that rigorous analysis of the separate effects of recession and adjustment is impossible. Nonetheless, she suggested that the effects of recession on women's employment can be shown primarily in terms of the impact on workforce participation rates, underemployment and unemployment, and on real wage levels. Meanwhile, those of adjustment can be viewed in terms of sectoral shifts in employment patterns and in wage differentials.

3.4.1 Three theories

In analysing the impact of recession and flexible employment adjustment on women's employment, this thesis has found that three basic theories including women as a reserve army of labour; job segregation; and substitution offer useful explanations (Baden 1993; Chang 2001; Rubery 1988:3; Shin 1999). At a simple level the three theories offer very different predictions about the relationship of women's employment to the changes in the economic conditions. The different predictions of the three theories are based upon the common assumption of women as an inferior workforce in the labour market in terms of wages, skills, and industrial and occupational divisions. The rational economic (human capital theory) and non-rational economic (labour market discrimination and gender-related theories) for gender differences in labour market discussed in chapter 2, provide the critical foundation to these three predictions. The theories were primarily developed to reveal the impact of economic booms and slumps on women's employment in various countries, including the Great Depression of the United States and recessions of the United States (1969-71 and 1979-82) and Britain (1970-81) (Brugel 1979; Humphries 1988; Milkman 1976; Rubery and Tarling 1988). In recent years, the use of the theories has expanded to examine the changes in women's employment in crisis-affected countries, which have experienced post crisis recession and economic restructuring on the basis of the SAPs (Baden 1993; Commonwealth Secretariat 1991; Judisman and Moreno 1990).

Women as a reserve army of labour theory. This theory asserts that women's employment moves positively in response to changes in economic conditions. That is, women serve as a flexible reserve pool

of labour to supplement the labour market in upturns, and return to the home in downturns (Beechey and Perkins 1987:124). As a result, women are seen to function as a buffer by being a part of the flexible workforce to meet the demands of the economy. The notion that women are the reserve army of the labour force derives from a Marxian point of view³⁰, although Marx did not use this notion to explain gender differences in the labour market (Walby 1990:35). The existence of the reserve army of labour is seen as necessary to capitalist development because it ensures that there are always workers available to be thrown into expanding areas and to be discharged from contracting areas of the capitalist economy. The theory of women as a reserve army of labour is closely associated with the human capital theory that explains why employers prefer men to women workers. Women's lower skill level, lesser job experience, and higher possibility of job intermittence due to family commitments affect employers' decisions in favour of keeping men despite their higher wage levels. Moreover, women as a reserve army of labour theory is also relevant to the 'discourage' workers effect which claims that unemployed workers are discouraged from remaining in the labour market in recession because they see little possibility of finding a job.

The prediction of women's greater disposability in times of redundancy is made on the basis of various factors (Barron and Norris 1976; Bruegel 1979). Seniority principles of last in and first out in making redundancies is more likely to dismiss shorter service workers who are mainly female workers, specifically part-time and married women workers (MacKay et al. 1971). The pre-existing gender differentials in employment - women largely occupied in workplaces with smaller, less unionised power - may also make

women more vulnerable to redundancy. In addition, because of the tendency for employers to prefer to keep on skilled workers, workers with lower levels of skill, specifically women in general, tend to be dismissed more often. Moreover, the notion that women's place is in the home may suggest that female unemployment is not as seriously problematic as male unemployment within both personal and social contexts (Bruegel 1979). Especially, married women are considered as a main source of the industrial reserve army of labour because their husband's income appears to make their workforce participation more flexible than for other workers (Beechy 1978: 167). However, this theory predicts that if women become a more stable and more dominant part of the workforce, this reserve army mechanism is likely to diminish to the extent that only a minority of women will remain in unstable jobs (Rubery 1988:4).

Substitution theory. The starting point for substitution theory is that the female workforce is a comparatively lower wage form of labour. According to this theory, economic recession provides women with new opportunities to participate in paid work because employers, who are pressed to cut costs and increase the flexibility of production, substitute women for men within their workforces (Humphries 1988). In addition, the de-skilling of jobs due to the increase of automation in the workplace makes substitution in the workforce easier, to a large degree. It can be seen that a great number of women, especially married ones, are forced to seek paid employment to make up for the loss of their husbands income during a recession. Hence, the theory predicts that women's workforce participation increases due to both labour demand and supply-side conditions during periods of recession, especially if the recession deepens. Firms usually offer lower-paying, time-limited or

part-time types of jobs during recession periods and women facing financial difficulties in their households are more willing to accept jobs on those types of employment conditions (Rubery 1988:5). In this regard, the prediction of substitution theory is opposed to the human capital-related view and relevant to 'added' workers effect. It explains that marginalised (or so called secondary) workers are more likely to enter the labour market in recession, mostly in order to make up loss of real income in a household as a result of a drop in their male family members' income, or unemployment³¹ (Baden 1997:36).

One criticism which applies to each theory - women as a reserve army and substitution - stems from each theory's inability to explain why capitalists do not want to employ women on a permanent basis if they are so cheap (Nanneke and Sinclair 1991). The substitution of low-wage for high-wage workers can be seen as the capitalist nature of cost-minimising. It means the substitution of female for male workers can be prevailing in any time of business operation in pursuit of wage cost reduction. Indeed, as a result of modern labour process, including automation, reduction in physical strength needed in production, and improvement of women's skill levels, the substitution of women for more expensive male workers has often occurred in the advanced goods and service-production. Moreover, rises in the material standards of living of the working class family in recent decades, as well as the changes in the female labour supply-side factors, including a decline in the number of children and an increase in the divorce rate, have made women's workforce participation more necessary. In this regard, the identification of women as a latent reserve in the contemporary period is seen as

'anachronistic' due to the increased importance of women's income in the household economy (Humphries 1983).

Job segregation theory. The job segregation theory, often called dual and segmented market analyses³², explains the gender division of the workforce in structural rather than the individual terms which human capital theorists suggest (Beechey and Perkins 1987:134-5; Judisman and Moreno 1990; Milkman 1976). According to job segregation theory, there is a rigid gender-typing of occupations that protects women from unemployment during a recession. The theory asserts that the demand-side creates the job segregation. It means that employers demand different types of workers depending on the characteristics of the jobs and thus women are preferred for the occupations traditionally done by women in households, such as nursing, teaching and sewing, and vice versa for men. It has been argued that these feminised jobs are quite remote from the predominantly male occupations that are easily influenced by the changes in business conditions. As a result, women's jobs contract less severely than do the jobs which men hold during an economic recession.

One inverse prediction of both job segregation and substitution theories involves the possibility that men may try to enter occupations traditionally held by women if the economic situation gets worse and men become desperate to find jobs (Humphries 1977). By lowering their wages and by prohibiting women from remaining in the labour market, men may replace women in some jobs, notably professional ones including teaching and nursing. Moreover, patriarchal organisations in the labour market, specifically labour unions and employers in favour of men may increase the

protection of men from unemployment by gender-discriminatory practices. These cases were shown during the depression period of the 1930s in the United States and this fact was not addressed in the substitution and segregation theories (Milkman 1976). One opposing view of job segregation theory says that the pattern of gender segregation is not always naturally determined based upon gender traits. The dual labour market division depending on economic factors also locates women in less stable areas of employment in all industrial sectors and, therefore, women may not benefit from the positives of occupational segregation (Bruegel 1979).

These three theories focus on different aspects of women's relationship to the paid labour market. Women as a reserve army theory and substitution theory are concentrated on flows into or out of the labour market, but segregation theory is concerned with the allocation of women within job structure (Rubery 1988:5). Nevertheless, all the theories hold the common assumption that women are non-family breadwinners and a secondary workforce in the capitalist labour market, and hence women offer a more flexible form of labour and accept lower-waged and home-related occupations. This view reflects the reality in many countries. Meanwhile, the ways workers and employers respond to recessionary conditions and the SAPs generally vary with various institutional and individual circumstances. In this regard, it can be more sensible if the three theories are taken as complementary in explaining a more sophisticated analysis of women's employment in individual countries.

Crises, specifically those caused by the balance of payment deficits and foreign debt burden, seem to have an instant negative impact on

the industrial sector producing manufacturing goods based on imported intermediate products in particular, largely due to devaluation of local currency. In addition, the industries which produce consumer durable goods, such as cars, electronics, and houses, are also seriously affected by crisis because of reduction in real wages. On the other hand, the industrial sector, manufacturing tradeable goods and final products with low-income elasticity, especially those entirely produced at a domestic level, including food, beverages, and clothes, are less likely to contract immediately following crises (Baden 1993; Humphries 1988:26-7). To some extent, this sector tends to expand during recession because of the devalued local currency that increases the products' price competitiveness in the international market (Sen and Grown 1987:62). Considering the reality that men are concentrated in car, electronics, and housing industries, whereas women are concentrated in the manufacturing industries of food, beverage, and clothes, women's employment conditions seem to be less eroded compared to those for men in the manufacturing sector. This pattern of employment changes was shown during the recessions in the United States during the post World War Two period (including 1971, 1975, 1985, and 1990-92), and also during the post 1997 financial crisis in the Philippines (Goodman 1994; Humphries 1983, 1988; Lim 2000).

Moreover, some studies, mostly of high-income countries, have argued that women's employment is less affected than that of men in recessions because of women's concentration in the tertiary industry (Bettio 1988; Goodman et al. 1993). However, one significant outcome to be noted from these countries' experiences is that the protected women's jobs in the service sector are largely low-waged, repetitive and boring work that has traditionally been done by women (Baden

1993; Bruegel 1979). Furthermore, this trend becomes less common in current cases, including the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Recent crises following economic restructuring are notably associated with structural weaknesses of a country's economy, especially financial and corporate sectors (Baden 1993). For example, hit by the 1997 crisis, Korean white-collar workers in the financial sector, including commercial banks and non-banking financial institutions, and big conglomerates with a high ratio of debt to equity were prioritised for employment adjustment, rather than blue-collar workers, when the government-led corporate restructuring began in early 1998 (Koo, 2000).

In terms of the effects of the SAPs, policies of trade and finance liberalisation have different effects on women's employment depending on the income levels of individual countries (Sen and Grown 1987:62). Free flows of foreign capital tend to boost low-income countries' manufacturing industries, especially labour-intensive export-oriented ones, as they have redundant low-wage labour (Jokes 1995). The expansion of these industries is usually possible under governmental stimulus, largely with repressive labour control. As the industries are predominantly female intensive, they also absorb a number of women in their export units, offering meagre working conditions including low wages, long working hours and poor workplace environment. This was the case for many Asian, Latin American, and African developing countries that have experienced debt and payment crises in the 1980s and 1990s (Commonwealth Secretariat 1991, 1993; Elson 1996; Standing 1999).

On the other hand, the case for higher-income countries that have exhausted their low-wage industrial production base is somewhat

reversed. Free trade and capital flow reinforces market competition in both domestic and international markets so that local exporting companies in those countries are inevitably challenged by new emerging countries' competition. As a result, by losing price competitiveness of their local products in both exports and imports, these female-dominate industries, particularly small and medium-size firms, tend to go out for business, resulting in serious job loss of female workers. By examining Mexico's experience in the late 1980s, Judisman and Moreno (1990) suggested that women's employment is more likely to be seriously affected at a later stage, particularly after structural adjustment programs are implemented due to an increase in competition from imports, or industrial restructuring and reductions in public sector financing.

In addition, policies of demand restraint through cutbacks in public expenditure and corporate downsizing lead to reductions in production and hence in demand for labour. In many cases, women are more likely than men to be discouraged by poor employment prospects and not actively search for jobs. As a result, they become cyclically unemployed but later remain as the structural unemployed. Additionally, public sector enterprise reform, mainly through privatisation, also has the same effect. Therefore, recruitment freezes, retrenchments, and wage freezes become common in labour markets as consequences of the austere policies, as well as increases in the demand for flexible forms of labour, including fixed-term, part-time and outsourced workers, for the purpose of assuring lean and efficient labour management. Consequently, women are preferred in some workplaces (Beneria 2001; Elson 1994; Humphries 1988).

While the formal market is contracting during the periods of recession and SAPs, the informal market is expanding (Beneria 2001; Elson 1994). The informal sector is commonly viewed as an economic sector existing separately from the formal sector or growing as a result of decline in the significance of formal sector and absorbing a marginal working population. However, this dualistic division of two sectors is incorrect in many cases, as they become more interconnected and interdependent largely through subcontracting or outsourcing, which is an efficiency-driven business trend of neo-liberal policies (Baden 1993). Nonetheless, in general, the informal sector offers relatively poorer working conditions, including 'very low level of earnings, absence of, or precarious, job contracts, unstable working conditions, poor access to social services and absence of fringe benefits, very low rates of affiliation to labour organisations, illegal or quasi-legal work' (Baden 1993:32). In this sector women tend to be highly involved in various informal activities, including self-employed, unpaid family-employed, home-based work, street vending and other trade-related and service activities. Especially during the period of recession, women withdrawn from the formal sector seem to enter the informal sector, accepting low wages and poor working conditions. This is related to 'added' worker effect. Therefore, some have argued that the effects of recession and the SAPs-based employment adjustment on women are seen as an expansion of underemployment and a growth of employment in the informal sector (Beneria 2001; Masika and Jokes 1996; Scott 1991).

In sum, the three theories, women as a reserve army of labour, job segregation, and substitution derive from very different predictions and different theoretical perspectives on women's employment and

its relationship to economic downturn. However, all three assume the industrial and occupational segmentation by gender, and women are predominantly located in the labour market with lower wage and poorer working conditions compared to men. Nonetheless, changes in women's employment in recessions can be shown in different ways depending on a country's industrial or sectoral development stage. Other countries' empirical findings reviewed in the section show various outcomes. Notably, both 'discouraged' and 'added' worker effects are more relevant to women's employment than to men's during periods of economic downturn and structural restructuring. The common outcomes of post crisis recession and the SAPs-based restructuring include the nature of women's employment becoming casual, unregulated, unprotected, and informalised (Baden 1993; Beneria 2001).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has raised three major issues that relate to gender-differentiated labour market changes during post crisis periods. The first is the neo-liberal SAPs that are advised for crisis-affected countries in pursuit of stabilisation and reform of troubled macroeconomic conditions. These programs primarily include political and economic policies for liberalisation of the market, including overseas trade of goods, services, and capital. Second, flexibility-driven neo-liberal labour policies become more dominant in a crisis-affected labour market, aiming to establish a lean and efficient labour management. However, flexibilisation of the labour market, mainly through dismissal of the workforce and expansion of the non-regular workforce, appears as the cause of a decline in

employment security, stability, benefits and rights. The third important issue raised in this chapter is that there are different employment effects of recession and structural adjustment on men and on women. In many cases, women tend to suffer disproportionately in employment. For instance, during the periods of the SAPs-based restructuring, women are more likely than men to be removed from their workplaces or for their employment contract to be downgraded to a more flexible and cheaper form, such as time-limited, part-time, or outsourced.

In this thesis I have chosen three theories predicting the impact of recession and the SAPs on women's employment for an examination of the Korean case. They are women as a reserve army of labour theory, job segregation theory, and substitution theory. First, the theory of women as a reserve army of labour considers that women serve as a flexible reserve pool of labour to supplement the labour market in upturns and return to the home in downturns. Secondly, job segregation theory suggests that women are better-protected from economic contraction due to occupational segregation by gender. Thirdly, according to substitution theory, economic recession provides women with new opportunities to participate in paid work because employers, in pursuit of labour cost reduction, prefer the female workforce with a comparatively lower wage form of labour. These theories have different predictions but are based on the common assumption that women are an inferior workforce in the labour market in terms of wages, skills, and industrial and occupational divisions.

The explanations for the neo-liberal labour mechanism and the gender impacts of employment adjustment in crisis-affected

countries are essential in examining the labour market changes by gender in post 1997 Korea. Following the crisis, rigorous labour market reform has taken place. This process was led by the Korean government, which intensified the existing neo-liberal labour arrangement, but lacked consideration of fair employment policies. As a result, it has been said that the neo-liberal employment adjustment in Korea occurred along gender lines. The next three chapters are related to Korea's adaptation to the neo-liberal SAPs after the occurrence of the crisis. Chapter 4 examines the effects of the crisis and the introduction of the SAPs in the political, economic, and social context. Chapters 5 and 6 will focus on the analyses of the aggregate employment data and the fieldwork results of this thesis.

Notes

²⁶ Structural adjustment is 'a term which is often used to describe a package of reforms usually advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) while granting loans to countries in deep debt or acute foreign exchange crisis' (Ratnam 1996:5).

²⁷ There have been many studies examining causes of a debt or balance of payment crisis and financial crisis. For the details of the 1997 Asian financial crisis see Basu and Taylor (1999), Chang and Whittaker (2001), Das (1999), Eichengreen (1999), Ito (2000), Kumar and Debroy (1999), Tourk (2000).

²⁸ 'Contagion' phenomenon was highlighted in the study of Asian financial crises because the extent of contagion in the crises was prominently stronger compared to previous cases which occurred in other regions. For more information, see, for example, Baig and Goldfajn 1999, Caramazza et al. 2000, Masson 1999)

²⁹ See Beneria and Feldman (1992), Cornia et al. (1987), Elson (1991), Floro (1995), and Moser (1989).

³⁰ Marx introduced the notion of the industrial reserve army in his book *Das Kapital*. He did not use it as an explanation of any one group's position in the labour market, but as one aspect of his theory of capital accumulation. He said that 'The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active labour-army; during the periods of over-production and paroxysm, it holds its pretensions in check.' (Marx 1967:598). See chapter 2 for the details of the particular Marxist point of view regarding gender relations in the capitalist market.

³¹ According to the International Centre for Research on Women's (ICRW) finding, in periods of recession women are likely to change their economic behaviour depending on their household income level, ages, and skill level. That is, in the developing countries' case, 'added workers effect' seems to appear in low-income families, while middle-income women may stay as discouraged workers by reducing their household consumption. In terms of age and skill levels, older, less-skilled women tend to withdraw from the labour market (Baden 1997).

³² Dual labour market theory was proposed by P. B. Doeringer and M. J. Piore (Doeringer and Piore 1971:165; Barron and Norris 1976:61). See chapter 3 for the details.

4. A history of gendered processes of social transformation in contemporary Korea

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the history of gendered processes of social transformation in Korea by exploring dominant values, practices, and institutions that have created and maintained gender hierarchies in society. Discussions of gender hierarchies, specifically how and in what form hierarchical gender relations have historically been introduced or reconstructed do much to explain the gendered structure of the Korean labour market. The central argument of this chapter is that patriarchy, that is male dominance over women in both public and domestic spheres of life, has persisted in Korean society and determines women's relationships to paid work. Korean women's disadvantaged status, which translates to lower wages and limited employment opportunities in a small number of traditional female occupations, has been a stimulus to investment, exports, and by extension, economic growth during its industrialisation process. Given the universal fact that political, socio-economic, and cultural values and practices are critical in shaping the inferior nature and condition of women's work, in this chapter I focus on the gender dimensions of those values and practices in the Korean historical context. Examination of this context is important because it offers a useful understanding of the gendered processes of socio-economic adjustment during the post 1997 crisis period.

From the beginning of the twentieth century up to the present, Korean society has been reshaped on the shifting ground of Japanese colonialism, industrialisation, military authoritarianism, democratic

reform, social liberalisation, and the economic miracle and crisis. In this process, gender identities, as well as class identities have been transformed to meet changing definitions of home and family, work, husband and wife, son and daughter. In describing Korea's experiences, Laurel Kendall notes that gender and class identities have been 'construction sites' and the transformation of them is still 'under construction' (2002:1-19). According to Kendall, Korea exhibits 'a condition of nonfixity, of gendered constructs in motion with changing politics, emergent classes, new commodities, new ways of talking about experiencing sexuality, generational conflicts, and economic adjustments'. She also points out that Korea is not unique in all of this. However, the experiences of Korean men and women contribute to a reconfiguring of the familiar scholarly languages of 'gender' (mainly created on the basis of Euro-American experience) in subtle ways because they represent a particular history, culture, and circumstance³³.

Korean women have made varying degrees of progress in many areas of their life including family, education, and work, throughout the country's political, economic, and social changes throughout the twentieth century. Yet, new forms of subordination have accompanied these improvements (Moon 2002a:80). Despite the increase in women's paid workforce participation, their roles and responsibilities involving family reproduction and maintenance have not reduced. For instance, married women have been persistently required to perform full-time wifely and motherly roles in households. As a result, working married women have on the whole suffered from a double burden of domestic and paid labour. Meanwhile, Korean women's formal education has increased to a significant level, contributing to the increase in women's

occupational skills. For instance, the ratio of over two-year college graduates between Korean men and women in 2000 was 48.3 to 51.7 per cent, showing more female graduates than males (MOGE 2002). However, the workforce participation of women with tertiary education was lower than that of primary and middle school graduates. This is a reflection of the reality that women with higher education, largely belonging to urban middle and upper-class families and whose husband engages in a white-collar occupation, have a greater tendency to stay home to look after children (Lee and Jung 1999; Moon 2002a:86; OECD 2003).

In the labour market, the percentage of women in the total workforce has continued to grow steadily, keeping pace with structural changes in the Korean economy over time. Approximately half of Korean women over the age of 15 currently participate in the workforce and they account for over 40 per cent of the total Korean workforce. Nonetheless, women have been predominantly represented as the secondary industrial workforce, and more suitable for low-wage, unskilled, less-important, and more flexible occupations. This gendered employment structure in terms of a quality and value of work shows the prevalence of male dominance that has systemically internalised in the Korean labour market (Chang 2001).

This chapter is divided into four parts and begins with a brief examination of traditional gender relations in Korea, paying close attention to patriarchy structured on the basis of neo-Confucian gender norms. Neo-Confucianism was an official ruling system for centuries, and its values and practices continue to prevail in Korean society³⁴ (Deuchler 1992; Lee, S. J. 1997; Lee and Jun 1999; Moon 2001:84). I shall begin with a discussion on the influence of neo-

Confucianism on contemporary Korean society followed by a debate on 'Asian Values'. The debate on 'Asian Values' provides contesting views between political leaders and public intellectuals of East and Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and Singapore and Western commentators and feminist critics in examining the roles of neo-Confucianism in those countries' political, economic and social development. The second part of this chapter looks at Japanese influences on gender hierarchy in Korea, largely that the social preconditions, including gendered family and employment policies that the Japanese colonial government set up in Korea, were passed on to post colonial Korea; Japanese business and employment patterns and practices had a constant impact on the shaping of those for Korea during its industrialisation period.

The third part of this chapter explores Korea's political, economic and social changes in the second half of the twentieth century. It covers Korea's post colonial nation building based on nationalist sentiments and its neo-Confucian heritage of statehood and culture. At that time, the neo-Confucian heritage of statehood was combined with the new democratic political system introduced by the United States. Especially the state, created by the 1961 military coup, used neo-Confucian values and practices, including absolute loyalty to the state rulers, patriarchal familism and collectivism, in order to justify the military state's legitimacy and penetrate individual lives and the community lives³⁵. In addition, aiming to maintain the stability of the society, the military state emphasised the neo-Confucian traditions, particularly the state-society, gender, class, and family hierarchies. I then move to the discussion of the country's socio-economic transformation over a period of compressed industrialisation led by the military state from the 1960s to 1980s and political-socio

democratisation and economic opening-up in the 1990s. The Korean state is seen to play a significant role in the success of post colonial economic growth and the maintenance of social order, represented by the state and subordinate classes and the gendered structure of living and working spheres (Koo 2001:23-45; Choi 1993:30). Therefore, the discussion focuses on the reconstruction of state-working class hierarchy and of gender hierarchy in work organisations and the labour movement.

The fourth part of the chapter examines the recomposition of gender relations in socialisation institutions of society, including family, education, military and work in the historical processes. Sexuality-related issues with particular attention to women's oppressed sexuality are also discussed. The central argument in this part is that these institutions are important for the construction of manhood and womanhood, which ultimately have contributed to the production and maintenance of gender hierarchy.

Finally, the fifth part covers the gendered process of social transformation in post 1997 Korea. During this time, in general, woman's wifely, motherly, and daughterly roles in households to comfort their male family members who were presumably undergoing a particularly difficult time in their workplaces were underlined. At the same time, the image of a strong mother who devotes herself to work for a living for the family was perpetuated largely through mass media and popular literature and hence women's workforce participation was considerably encouraged in order to cover the loss of her husband's income. Meanwhile, based on 'male breadwinner bias', labour market actors including the state, employers and employees tended to take it for granted that firms

could remove women from their workplace or exclude women from high wage jobs under circumstances of employment adjustment. Consequently, this shows that the hardships of the post 1997 recession and employment adjustment were unequally distributed on the basis of gender in Korea.

4.2 Patriarchy in pre-capitalist Korea: the influences of neo-Confucianism on contemporary Korea and the 'Asian Values' debate

This section discusses the formation of patriarchal gender norms and practices on the basis of neo-Confucian philosophy in pre-capitalist Korea. Amongst various factors upholding patriarchy in contemporary Korean society, Confucianism, especially Neo-Confucianism, provides a crucial ideological basis in formalising patriarchal culture and tradition as a ruling system of the society³⁶ (Lee 1995). Neo-Confucian philosophy was taught nation-wide in the *Joseon* Dynasty (1392-1910 BC) as the state ideology. Aiming to maintain a well-regulated state, the rulers of the Dynasty emphasised neo-Confucian ethics emphasising a form of hierarchical collectivism in which female and younger members remain strictly obedient to the commands of the older males in respectively, family, community, and the state³⁷. Moreover, neo-Confucian teachings include absolute loyalty for the monarch, filial piety for parents and chastity and fidelity for women. In addition, neo-Confucianism stresses that a virtuous man who is well-educated and comprehends human ethics can govern a society. Meanwhile, the ideology holds that a virtuous woman is one who obeys her male head, including her father, husband and son, and who plays good daughterly, wifely

and motherly roles without rebelling against the male authorities in the household (Cho, K. W. 1994 : 209-10).

In the past many restrictions were imposed on women in terms of their activities and life spheres. Women, particularly in the upper *yangban* class, were restricted to staying inside the house, which also had separate areas for male and female family members³⁸. Moreover, women were not allowed to have formal education but instead were taught home management, self-discipline, filial piety, hierarchal marital relations, motherhood, and thrift at home³⁹. Women's status was determined only in accordance with their male family members' official status and thus they could receive considerable respect from both family and society if their husband or son succeeded as a high official (Deuchler 1992:261-4).

Moreover, a clear gender division of labour existed in households. One of the five neo-Confucian principles, guiding human relationships, explicitly mentions functional difference between men and women, highlighting women's domesticity. That is, *bubu yubyeol*, literally meaning the existence of differences between a husband and a wife, implies that men and women have different roles to play (Kim, K. H. 1996:158). In this context, women were excluded from any decision-making activities but were obligated to look after all kinds of domestic work, including the management of the home economy, family reproduction and maintenance⁴⁰. In the case of women in the lower classes, in addition to domestic work, they were also required to participate in outside economic activities, mostly farming, domestic-related, or light-manufacturing work, to make a living for their family (Kang and Shin 2001:54). Moreover, neo-Confucian teaching covered 'the seven evils (*chilgeojiak*)' which

women were not allowed to commit in their family; otherwise, they were expelled from their homes. The seven evils include disobeying parents-in-law, failing to bear a son, committing adultery, being jealous, carrying a hereditary disease, being garrulous, and stealing (Cho, K. W. 1994:210).

There have been ongoing debates on the impact of Confucianism on East Asia's politics, economy, and culture, developed as the controversy over 'Asian Values' or 'Asian-style democracy'⁴¹ (Kim Y. M. 1997). The idea of 'Asian Values' or 'Asian-style democracy' is used to defend authoritarian arrangements in some Asian countries on the grounds of 'Asian Values' alleged effectiveness in promoting economic success (Sen 1997). The advocates of 'Asian Values' consider that Confucian values, including hierarchical group solidarity, family loyalty, and high commitment to education, are distinguishing elements of the East Asian countries' rapid economic growth in the second half of the twentieth century (Johnson 1994; Weller 1998; Woo-Cumings 1994). Furthermore, the Confucian virtues of frugality, diligence, hard work, self-sacrifice, and self-discipline are often singled out as the essential resources that have led East Asia to successful capitalist economic development (Kim 1994:98).

However, the view of Confucianism as a key to East Asian, particularly Korean economic success has encountered many criticisms. The first criticism lies in the pro-capitalist characteristics of the developmental states in East Asia, including Korea, Japan and Taiwan, which were opposed to the virtues of the Confucian leadership and its neglect of material accumulation and utilitarian ways. For instance, Kim and others (1999:51) argue that the way Park

Jung-Hee, a military junta who ruled Korea from 1960 to 1979, achieved Korea's economic success based on capitalist accumulation was completely against Confucian leadership and hence his approach was seen as being revolutionary in Korean history.

The critics of 'Asian Values' argue that such Confucian ethics, emphasising social order and respect for legitimate authority are used for justification of authoritarian rule in Asia, resulting in constraining the development of democracy and suppressing human rights in each country. An additional argument is that strong familism and collectivism in Asia tend to create close connections between political elites and their family members, relatives, or close friends, often resulting in money or power-related corruption. This notion was later connected to the denunciation of 'crony capitalism' in Asia following the 1997 Asian economic crisis⁴² (Kang 2002). After the outbreak of the crisis, the *New York Times* journalist, Sanger, wrote, 'While the world was enthralled with the best of 'Asian Values', phenomenal growth rates obscured the worst: crony capitalism, corruption and secrecy eating away at the region's accomplishments like termites in a forest of fast-growing bamboo'⁴³ (November 23 1997).

In relation to such 'Asian Values' as attachment to the family as an institution, feminist critics argue that the family is strongly patriarchal and thereby Confucian culture disadvantages women in various aspects (Kim, S. H. 1999 ; Samuels 1999). For instance, Hye-Sook Kim (1999) writes,

Since the family is strongly patriarchal, and Confucian culture strictly distinguishes between women's and men's places,

between women's work and men's work, Asian Values as political norms serve to limit equal opportunities for jobs. Various social institutions, like tax and social welfare systems, as well as social policies, like employment and unemployment policies, presuppose women to be housewives and often fail to count the female labour force as a real economic factor.

However, such feminist critiques on 'Asian Values' in respect to women's rights are opposed by many governments that reject the relevance of human rights to their female citizens. Those governments view women's rights from a domestic cultural perspective which prescribes the ways in which women should behave or be treated⁴⁴. For instance, in societies where family solidarity is highly valued, women's rights may be regarded as undermining the family.

Finally, one criticism has been made regarding the terminology 'Asian Values'. That is, 'Asia' specifically refers to East Asia, which is not homogeneous in terms of either religion, history, or culture. Rather, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity are interconnected in the East Asian countries⁴⁵. Therefore, the criticism considers that it is not appropriate to regard Confucianism as a single cultural value dominating in East Asia (Sen 1997; Kim, S. H. 1999).

This thesis highlights neo-Confucianism as an important cultural feature determining the formation of gender relations in Korea. It is true that various other religious or philosophical streams, including Buddhism and Christianity, are also important to the maintenance of patriarchy in contemporary Korea. However, neo-Confucianism

deserves particular attention because of its extensive influence on the ways of individuals' lives and the structure of political, economic, and social institutions in Korea. Neo-Confucianism, with an emphasis on a hierarchal social structure consisting of a royal monarchy, strong class divisions, and a patriarchal, large family system, is important to maintaining separate and unequal roles for men and women. In particular, its gender norm, stressing women's subordination to the men in the family and society has become a significant basis of the construction of gendered nationalism. Further, it is related to hierarchical gender relations in the Korean capitalist labour market, resulting in shaping gender differentials in employment in terms of roles, status, and values of labour.

4.3 Japanese influence during the colonial and post colonial period: the early transformation of traditional patriarchy to modern social and economic institutions

Post colonial and post war Korean development considerably rested on economic and social preconditions set up by Japanese colonialism. The economic advancement made by the Japanese occupation is seen as an expansion of Korea's infrastructure, a contribution to a wider commercialisation of agriculture, and an establishment of the early modern capitalist enterprises (Haggard and Moon 1993:59). Peter Petri asserts that the East Asian countries, especially Korea and Taiwan, have adopted their developmental trajectories following the Japanese model⁴⁶(Bernard and Ravenhill 1995). This model is also called the Bureaucratic Authoritarian Industrialising Regime (BAIRs) model, characterised as 'relative state autonomy, central

coordination, bureaucratic short- and long-range planning, high flexibility in moving in and out of industrial sectors, private concentration in big conglomerates, exclusion of labour, exploitation of women in paid work, low expenditure on social welfare' (Cumings 1984:38)⁴⁷. Additionally, militarisation and authoritarian repression were common in pre-war Japan and in post colonial Korea and Taiwan.

In terms of business and employment patterns, Korea fostered Japanese *zaibatsu*-like industrial conglomerates, called *jaebeol*, with extensive family interpenetration, and ideologies of familiar hierarchy and filial loyalty (Cumings 1984). In pre-war Japan, the state and *zaibatsu* cooperated to execute a systematic repression and incorporation of labour, by effectively using a forced military-style discipline in the factories, and women were particularly exploited, receiving much lower wages than men for similar work. The Japanese-style labour practices, including life-time employment, a seniority-based wage system, the repression and exclusion of labour and exploitation of women, were adapted to Korea in pursuit of export-led industrialisation. Therefore, social conditions, including the state's ruthless labour repression and gender differential in work, set up by Japanese colonialism are seen as rigidly remaining in post colonial Korea (Haggard et al. 1997).

For instance, in the colonial Japanese-based factories both Korean men and women suffered from lower-wages and longer-working hours compared to Japanese workers who did the equivalent work. However, as well as ethnic discrimination, Korean female workers had to endure gender discrimination in the labour market in terms of promotion and wage in particular. The patriarchal tendency of

Japanese colonial power made it common sense that female colonials were located at the bottom of the industrial workers' hierarchy (Lee, H. J. 1996b:94; Kang and Shin 2001:60-2; Kang 1999:123). For instance, the wages of a Korean male worker were half those of a Japanese male worker. A Korean adult female worker earned only one quarter. Korean females in their teens received as low as a sixth of Japanese male workers' wages. Moreover, the colonial labour controls, including ruthless supervision with the use of violence, sexual harassment and rape in the workplace, severely oppressed female workers to be obedient to their given working conditions, such as excessive working hours and little freedom to go outside the workplace.

Furthermore, Japan continued to have an effect on the reconstruction of post war Korean institutions, including family and labour market, and, as a result, the two countries have had many similarities in terms of the gendered nature and pattern of social institutions. For example, the family registry system called *hojuje*, which was introduced by the Japanese colonial government, persistently prevailed in the contemporary period⁴⁸. Male lineage is the principle of the legal system and women are thus not able to be a legal head of their family. As a result, this system disadvantages women's status on a legal basis and still remains rigorously enforced in the contemporary period (Moon 2002a:81; Park 1993). The system was first legally enforced in Korea in order to make its colonial governance easier in terms of imposing taxes and drafting people for work and military participation. In the meantime, men's frequent absence from their family because of their duty to participate in military or military-related industries as a voluntary or involuntary workforce from the late 1930s increased women's responsibility to

support the livelihood of their family to a great extent (Cho Han 2002:171).

Moreover, the gendered structure of Japanese work and society has been exceptionally comparable to that of Korea. Regardless of the advancement of economy and women's education, Japanese women's status, value, and power in employment have persistently remained inferior to men in the contemporary period (Han 2000). According to Upham (1993:332), 'despite the centrality of women's rights in post war reforms, government and business policies toward working women have stressed not equality or freedom of choice for women but their supporting role in the household and at the workplace'. Hence, it has been said that Japan is a persistent outlier among industrial societies because it has a greater male-female wage differential and more serious gender segregation in occupations than do other high-income countries⁴⁹ (Brinton 1988; Iwao 1993). This Japanese employment system based on patriarchal gender biases has influenced the Korean labour market in both direct and indirect ways.

4.4 The gendered processes of social transformation over a nation-state building and compressed industrialisation

4.4.1 The formation of the nation-state building and housewifisation of modern Korean women

The transformation from a thousand years of monarchy and 35 years of the Japanese colonial system to a liberal democracy and capitalist market economy occurred rather abruptly in Korea. It was neither

self-motivated nor self-achieved. The termination of the 35 years of colonisation, achieved by external forces' assistance, set the country free from the repressive colonial control but left a painful legacy of the division of the country between democratic South and communist North. With little understanding and experience of the new political and economic systems, Korea established its state leadership influenced by both internal and external political elements.

South Korea's democratic political system was introduced by its most significant ally country, the United States and it was combined with a neo-Confucian heritage of statehood, referring to a strong centralised dynastic ruler as the principle of organisation (Kim 1994:100). Moreover, state-society relations were formed largely on the basis of classical patriarchal Confucian governance, represented by the idea of 'the act of ruling as analogous to parents protecting and feeding their dependent children' and thus 'the obligation of the superordinate (the state) legitimised its privilege to rule the subordinate (people)' (Moon 2002b:39). Therefore, the interplay between Confucian governance and modern institutions is crucial to interpreting the state-society relations against the conditions of capitalist industrialisation.

Political authoritarianism and capital accumulation were inseparable themes in the political economy of the Korean State (Lie 1998:76). The authoritarian developmentalist Park Jung-Hee regime emerged from a military coup in 1961 and lasted for almost twenty years. The regime incorporated two dominant ruling ideologies represented as anti-communism and capitalist economic development. At that time, Koreans had a strong sense of insecurity after undergoing a series of political and economic turmoils, including Japanese colonisation and

the Korean War, and, as a result, were motivated to improve political and economic performance (Kim 1994). Therefore, the paternalistic state leadership had few problems in mobilising the people's nationalist sentiments based upon the two national priorities.

Economic development was defined as a national goal of 'modernisation of the fatherland' (*joguk geundaehwa*), referring to a project that makes the nation affluent and powerful enough to protect itself from the communist north and other foreign powers (Koo 2001:12). In this regard, militarism was also strengthened by the nationalist history of Korea represented in terms of self-defence by patriotic warriors fighting against foreign military invasions (Moon 2002a:92). These two national priorities appeared in the state's slogan, 'self-reliant defence and self-reliant economy'. At the same time, the authoritarian state underlined neo-Confucian norms of familism and collectivism, hindering individual initiatives but encouraging loyalty to kinship and communal collectivities⁵⁰ (Kim 1994). Thus, political, economic, and cultural distinctiveness was powerfully used in the justification of the military state's legitimacy and penetration of the ways of individual and community lives (Cho Han 2000).

The language of 'modernisation' was commonly used to generate a modern notion of gender identity in the context of post war capitalist industrialisation. The image of the modern man was to be the one who devoted himself to nation building by working hard in the workplace⁵¹, while that for the modern woman was to be the domestic partner of the modern man as a good wife and wise mother⁵² (Cho Han 2002:173). The Confucian family system, ascribing different roles, responsibilities, and living spheres between a

husband and wife, was stressed in order to create a normative principle of provider-husband and dependent housewife in the modern Korean society (Lee, S. J. 1997; Lee and Jung 1999; Moon 2002a:84). Moon (2002a:85) suggests that Korean family laws regulating kinship and inheritance of property served to modernise the Confucian patriarchy in two ways. The first was through the *hojuje*, asserting that the family master (*hoju*), who is the legal representative of a family in civil law, is required to financially support his family. The second was through the law reformed in 1962 under Park's regime, dictating that all married sons, except the eldest, become legally recognised as family masters of independent households, separated from their father's household⁵³. This law was implemented as a result of the emergence of a nuclear family in the process of industrialisation.

In conjunction with industrialisation, a third of the population migrated from the rural to urban areas for 20 years from the 1960s-1980s. The rapid urbanisation changed the structure and pattern of the Korean traditional family considerably in the sense that the traditional extended family system declined and the new nuclear family system emerged. Additionally, the state's policy limiting the number of children in households to two in the 1970s and as low as one in the 1980s contributed to a decrease in the size of the families (Kang 1999). These changes to the modern-style family and social settings transformed Korean women's life style in various aspects. In general, women had more education, more material satisfaction in the household, and were exposed to foreign culture through movies and television. Hence, most women idealised a happy married life with a successful husband and one or two children, so that women

concentrated on maintaining the family's stability by devoting themselves as a family caretaker (Cho Han 2002:172; Choi 1994:196).

The normative gender dichotomy of husband-provider and dependent housewife affected women's view of their status. For instance, it created the common view of a married woman as primarily a housewife, even though she had workforce participation in paid work for the family's subsistence (Moon 2002a:85). Meantime, due to a lack of public childcare facilities and the nuclear family system, married women's role in child bearing and rearing began to be emphasised in the social and economic context of modernisation. Therefore, women became the first persons to be blamed if their family fell into any troubles, such as their husband's poor occupational performance in the workplace and their children's low achievement in school. This new modern womanhood, created by the strategic intervention of the state, highlighted women's dedication to their family members to a significant level (Kim, E. S. 2000).

4.4.2 Export-led industrial development and feminisation of work

Despite women's primary role in a household, Korean women began to enter paid work in line with the country's industrialisation, and the gender division of labour became more apparent in the Korean labour market (Kang 1999). The state-led economic development plans, first launched in 1962, over time increased the importance of both manufacturing and tertiary industries. Especially, the state's developmental policies focused on maximising the growth of income and exports so that the labour policies were designed to maximise the labour supply for manufacturing industries (Cho, S. 1994:101).

The export-led economic growth strategy was largely based on the light-manufacturing industries with high female-labour intensity, including the textile, apparel, and electronic industries, and thereby the demand for female labour rose to a significant level. Greater availability of cash employment in the non-agricultural sector accelerated the shift of female workers, young rural women in particular, from the agricultural to the manufacturing sector (Lee, H. J. 1996b:213). Meanwhile, married women in rural areas mostly remained in the agricultural sector, which had a labour shortage because of many men and young people's movement to the urban industrial areas. The tertiary sector, including public and personal service jobs, also absorbed the female workforce continuously.

Young middle class women in urban households accounted for a majority of the tertiary sector workforce. As a result of only one or two children in households, family investment for children, including education and material provision, was increasingly given to both boys and girls. The girls who grew up in middle-class nuclear families and had extended education began to talk about 'self-realisation' as individuals and to see having a paid job crucial to achieving their 'self-realisation' (Cho Han 2002:177). Many of them attained office-related skills, such as typing and accounting, in the secondary school, or professional skills in the tertiary schools, such as teaching and nursing. This female workforce met the rising labour demand in the public sector and private firms, particularly middle or large-size ones, such as personal service, banking, and finance jobs. Yet these women were mostly engaged in jobs requiring basic office skills, less responsibility, and low managerial expertise. These girls were called 'office workers' (*hoesawon*) and gained a relatively high and privileged social status compared to girls in other occupations.

However, the girls from the urban low class and rural regions experienced paid work differently. Daughters of farm families often left home in their teens and became industrial workers in order to make a living not only for themselves but also for their poor family in rural areas. A majority of them entered the export-promoted manufacturing factories⁵⁴, largely located in Free Export Zones (FEZs)⁵⁵ or some industrial complexes in cities (Lee, O. J. 1993; Kim, S. K. 1997:9-14). The emergence of 'young unmarried girls' in manufacturing factories during this time period generated some contradictory discourses in relation to the gender and class struggles of the modern Korean society (Kim, S. K. 1997). Most of them were young females from poor rural or urban low-class families with a low level of school education, and their work was mostly semi-skilled or simple repetitive jobs. Most of these girls' earnings were sent to their family to be used for the family livelihood and often for their male family members' school education (Lee, O. J. 1993). As a result, the social status of these girls appeared to be the least privileged among all the industrial worker groups. Moreover, the industries in which they were engaged offered very poor employment benefits and conditions, including long working hours, low wages, and few workers' rights in terms of participating in collective bargaining or labour management.

The majority of these young women workers were employed in a limited number of key export industries; for example, 56.1 per cent of women workers in 1987 were employed in only three out of 27 manufacturing industries. The three industries were clothing apparel, textiles, and electronics⁵⁶ and the percentage of female workers in each industry during the same year was 72.9, 62.5, and 52.6 per cent,

respectively. Wages in those industries were meagre for both men and women but women's wages were far lower than those for men. The respective ratio of female to male earnings in the apparel, textiles and electronics industries was 48.9, 46.3, 44.7 per cent in 1980 and each ratio rose to 58.4, 52.0, 57.6 per cent in 1990 (Seguino 1997). For instance, the female workers' average working hours in textiles and apparel industries in the 1980s was longer than 240 per month (MOLAB 2002). In addition, one interesting finding in relation to working hours is that among 17 Asian countries Korea was the only one in which women worked longer hours than men in the 1980s, according to the ILO data (Park 1995).

Additionally, gender-based task segregation in production was regarded as a major mechanism to differentiate labour controls between male and female workers in the factories (Chang et al. 1995; Choi 1989:63; Kim, S. K. 1997:50-2; Lee, O. J. 1993). Thus, different types of jobs for each gender were already set from the job entry level. Women were excluded from skilled and important tasks and managerial and supervisory positions except for lowest-level supervisory one. For instance, in the spinning and weaving industry women were machine tenders and operatives, whereas men were the machine technicians and other auxiliary workers. In the apparel industry women were engaged in sewing and finishing pieces, whereas men were involved in engineering, machine maintenance, cutting, ironing, and operating specialised machines. In electronic industries, a majority of women were located in electronic component assembly, doing simple repetitive work.

In addition to the gender differences in wages and tasks, female workers in factories suffered from inhumane treatment by

management (Kim, S. K. 1997:40-6; Koo 2001:61-2; Lee, O. J. 1993). In most cases, these workers were neither treated as free, autonomous and self-respecting human beings nor respected as people who needed a minimum amount of rest and leisure time. In the eyes of management, the young women were regarded as little different from a factory machine, which was capable of working ceaselessly over 24 hours a day. The contemptuous attitudes toward women in factories seemed natural and common sense in a Korean society in which a hierarchical class system as well as a hierarchical gender system were prevalent (Koo 2001:48). Traditional Korean society, including *Goryeo* and *Joseon*, was governed by a hereditary elite who belonged to an upper class or *yangban* and were successful in the state's Confucian-style civil service exam (Deuchler 1992:12-3). Based on the class system, social status and occupations were determined. During the *Joseon* dynasty, private or public-owned slaves (*gongnobi* or *sanobi*) or people in the lowest class (*chunmin*) mostly performed physical labour in the non-agricultural sector, and most of them were butchers, leatherworkers, and shamans. Artisans belonged to a middle class, called commoners (*yangmin* or *sangmin*). Thus, the traditional demeaning status of physical labour and of women as a gender was directly linked to the images of factory female workers, shown as low status, dirty, and unrespectable⁵⁷.

The society gave these girls low credit recognition, and commonly named them '*gongsuni*' ('factory girl')⁵⁸. As a result, they were disparaged as an industrial workforce located at the bottom of the modern working-class structure in Korea. However, at a superficial national level they were recognised as '*saneop jeonsa*' ('industrial warriors') fighting for the growth and welfare of the nation involved in an economic war against foreign competitors and as dutiful

daughters in supporting their poor families⁵⁹ (Kim, S. K. 1997; Kim, H. M. 1999; Kim, E. S. 2000). This respectable image of factory girls in the context of patriarchy and national economic development were often shown in the state-led media, school textbooks, and industrial campaigns to promote the spirit of sacrifice, loyalty and obedience as the topmost virtues of industrial workers (Kim, S. K. 1997:5). Moreover, these public relations magnified the girls' devotion and sacrifice as unmarried women's great responsibility to the nation, firms and family. Therefore, these girls were represented from two opposing perspectives - *gongsuni* and *saneop jeonsa* - which served interests of nationalist patriarchy and capitalism (Kim, E. S. 2000).

4.4.3 The State, repressive labour control and workers' struggles in the 1970 and 1980s

The pro-growth state explicitly showed its tendencies for a pro-capital and anti-labour attitude by oppressing and exploiting industrial workers⁶⁰ (Choi 1993:30; Huh 2002:234-8). Assuming that there was an unlimited supply of labour, especially from the rural area, the state made an effort to induce workers to do more work but paid little attention to workers' employment rights and conditions. In particular, wages were maintained as low as possible in justification of the cost competitiveness of the export products (Huh 2002:231). In addition, little effort was made by the state to improve the quality of the workforce or the welfare of the workers, including protection of their health, safety, and working environment. Workers with the spirit of sacrifice, loyalty and obedience were regarded as virtuous and patriotic, while ones in militant unions were regarded as disrupting industrial peace and harming the economic development process. The anti-communist sentiment was used to prevent workers'

legitimate right to strike and to persecute them for exercising their right to organise. The state condemned any labour dispute or protest as a pro-communist instigation and punished troublesome workers by means of the national security laws or other labour laws prohibiting workers' collective activities⁶¹ (Huh 2002:239).

Education and military institutions were the foremost powerful and useful agencies for preparing industrial workers (Koo 2001:47-8). Thus, these two institutions highlighted the work ethic of diligence, loyalty, and worker-management harmony as a virtue of industrial workers by training the young in subjection to formal authority, hierarchical authoritarianism, time orientation, regimented work schedules, and restriction of freedom. Until the late 1980s school textbooks could not be published without the state's prior approval. Anti-communism and authoritarian traditionalism were intensively taught in primary and secondary school curricula, and in military education (Moon 1994:38). More importantly, the patriarchal familism was used in workplaces in order to ensure worker submission and loyalty by appealing to family values. For the purpose of promoting the concept of familism, the state created a slogan - "Treat workers like family members, Do factory work like my own work" - displayed at almost every factory across the country (Koo 2001:12).

Meanwhile, the country's industrialisation over the 1960s to 1980s, largely depending on the growth of the manufacturing sector, resulted in producing a very large industrial workforce population in urban areas (Kang 2001:462-3). The authoritarian state's persistent labour oppression and provision of poor working conditions produced serious conflicts between workers and the managerial

authorities, including both the state and capitalists. Industrial workers did not oppose capitalism or the 'capitalist ethic' with any alternative ideological apparatus beyond the capitalist system. Nonetheless, workers tended to develop dissatisfaction or negative attitudes towards the way the authoritarian state developed exploitative labour and industrial policies and handled labour problems in the existing capital mode of production. Additionally, in the workplace workers invariably confronted authoritarian management, who treated them inhumanly. Therefore, with growing awareness of their socio-economic realities, industrial workers increasingly began to be engaged in unionisation in the 1960s and 1970s (Choi 1989:73-4).

It is notable that the Korean female industrial workers, particularly in the light-manufacturing sector with high female intensity, often showed their resistance to the patriarchal social structures and capitalist authoritarianism through organised female union movement in the 1970s and 1980s⁶². As well as in other arenas, male dominance was accepted as natural in trade unions so that women appeared as inferior members in male-female combined unions (Kang 2001; Kim, H. M. 1999). This is why women in female-only unions rather than women in combined unions had a better union representation for women's issues. Young female factory workers at the bottom of the Korean labour market hierarchy were affiliated with progressive labour unions (Song 1999). Their organised union activism was more effective than that of men in the 1970s in terms of stronger resistance, determination, solidarity and resilience and, as a result, played a leading role in the country's democratic unionism⁶³ (Koo 2001:92).

4.5 Political economy of Korean work, gender and social change since the 1980s

4.5.1 The second military regime and the 1987 democratisation movement

The authoritarian regime, ruled by the first military junta for almost 20 years, abruptly ended in 1979 because of Park's assassination. During the period of the country's political vacuum after Park's death, the military general, Chun Doo-Hwan led a military coup followed by a series of anti-government demonstrations organised by students, workers, political opponents and ordinary citizens. 'Kwangju Uprising' (also called 'Kwang-ju Massacre') was the most important single politicised anti-government event at the beginning of the 1980s, and finally Chun gained his political power as a leader of the country (Lie 1998:120-1). Chun's political repression was at its height in the early 1980s. Chun also placed a strong emphasis on the two national priorities of the previous Park's regime - economic growth and anti-communism - in order to legitimate his military regime. Any democratic or anti-government movements were prohibited by force. Especially, with the aim of economic recovery from the slump in the early 1980s, Chun offered *jaebeols* more financial and business incentives and labour policies which resulted in the dismantling of union organisations and sacking of union leaders (Kang 2001:470).

In the meantime, the external pressure of economic liberalisation increasingly pushed the country to open-up. Moreover, the domestic anti-government and pro-democracy sentiments became more consolidated among students, workers, intellectuals, and

underground political activists. Workers' struggles became increasingly manifested as organised strikes and boycotts in workplaces in alliance with students, the church, and underground labour activists, who fought against the country's political authoritarianism (Choi 1993:33; Koo 1993:141, 2001:102-5). University students and underground labour activists significantly raised workers' political consciousness based upon humanitarianism, democratism, or further socialism, by working with them in the same workplaces or teaching them at night schools⁶⁴. As a result, workers gradually became more radical and active in fighting for their employment rights and benefits during this time period. After all, the alliance among workers, including both males and females, students and labour activists created a large-scale organised power and appeared as a great threat to the authoritarian political and economic entities⁶⁵. This political collectivism against the authoritarian rule became an important basis for 'the Great Workers' Struggles' in 1987.

During the entire month of June in 1987 a constant series of democratisation movements occurred across the country by a great number of students, industrial workers, political leaders, and citizens, who stood up against the military dictatorship. Unprecedentedly, white-collar workers and middle-class citizens participated. Various women's organisations and female workers also made great contributions to the movement. At great cost to many in the society, the country finally opened up for democratic transition. One of the greatest achievements of the movement was the revival of the direct presidential election system that was abolished 17 years previously. Additionally, the culture and politics affecting labour market conditions moved into a new phase, more favourable to the workers. Following the movement in June, a number of nationwide labour

movements took place and South Korean workers and labour experts call this historical event 'the Great Workers' Struggles' (Koo 2001:153).

Workers asked for democratic labour market reform: the breakdown of pro-capital authoritarian labour rule; the power balance between capital and labour; humane treatment of workers by managers; and improvement of poor working conditions such as low wages and long working hours. The success of the 1987 movement contributed to the improvement of the wage and working conditions of the Korean labour market⁶⁶. Improved human rights, greater equity in income distribution, and social justice were obtained as a consequence of the country's transition to the political liberalisation and democratisation (Cho, S. 1994:53). Finally, there were two major positive effects of the labour movements in democratisation: first, 'labour activism enhanced economic justice by narrowing wage gaps between workers and higher-paid groups' and secondly, 'new insurgent labour movement increased labour's political autonomy' (Song and Suh 2001:160-1).

Active labour movements in post 1987 contributed to the creation of a progressive national-level trade union, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU, *Minnochong*) in 1995. The KCTU emerged in opposition to FKTU (*Hannochong*) which had a passive and pro-government tendency. The KCTU embraced both blue and white-collar unions in pursuit of labour autonomy and promotion of unity and coalition. Therefore, the authoritarian state's labour strategy, divide-and-conquer, confronted a new challenge by the nationwide organised labour unions. In addition, the success of the movement also provided opportunities for women to organise themselves

nationwide and for instance, Korean Women Workers Associates United (KWWAU) ⁶⁷ and Korean Womenlink (*Hangukyeoseong-minuhoe*), a non-governmental organisation, emerged after 1987.

However, these drastic changes in labour market conditions in the late 1980s became a significant internal force urging the country to go through an inevitable industrial structural adjustment. Due to the pressure of increasing inflation and wage costs in the domestic markets, as well as the influence of the world recession led by a series of oil shocks, foreign and domestic corporations with labour-intensive production facilities in Korea began to seek cheaper wage countries for relocation. Subsequently, a number of manufacturing industries with high labour intensity transferred to other countries with lower production costs at that time. In addition, firms that decided to remain in Korea began to downsize their workforce, frequently reducing active labour unionism. The withdrawals of domestic and foreign capital to other countries and firms' downsizing appeared as devastating threats to workers (Kim 1994:152-4).

4.5.2 Opening-up for democratic and neo-liberal economic transition from 1987 to 1997

In the 1990s, especially after the termination of over 30 years of the military regime in 1992, Korean society became more democratic and open to foreign societies. Democratisation brought the society more freedom of the press, of speech and of organisation. While the role of the state was reduced in political and socio-economic arenas, various civil groups emerged, largely among intellectuals and university students, and introduced numerous initiatives to improve public

interests, human rights and protection for the social minority groups. The civil groups' non-violent and peaceful actions were relatively new to Korean society; most of the populace's actions, largely made by students and workers, were militant or confrontational (Lee, S. H. 1993).

The strong connection between the state and business became weaker when the first genuinely civilian president, Kim Yung-Sam, took over governing power in early 1993. The increased foreign pressure for market liberalisation and domestic pressure for democratisation triggered Korea to restructure its whole economy on the basis of the neo-liberal economic approach, the dominant global economic regime. Therefore, as well as diversification of industrial products to more capital-intensive, high-value added and technology-based products, the economy pursued trade liberalisation by becoming a member of the World Trade Organisation, by the de-nationalisation of banks and by the establishment of anti-monopoly legislation. These changes toward the neo-liberal market economy resulted in a weakening of the state's authority and an increase in enterprises' decision-making power in the market (Yoo 2001:73).

The industrial restructuring to an advanced economy and transition to the democratic government in the 1990s shifted the climate of the labour market to a great extent. In pursuit of democratic government, President Kim attempted to remove the state's authoritarian labour control and to regulate unions' activities with legal and administrative approaches. He also included labour experts and union leaders in policy making; they became members of the Assembly, or independent researchers or consultants on labour

relations (Song 1999). In addition, labour unions endeavoured to expand their political influence through support for the establishment of a labour party, by the amendment of labour laws and standards, and by the strengthening of centralised industrial unions. The two nationwide trade unions, FKTU and KCTU, the legacies of the 1987 workers' struggles, were the major political representing bodies. Nevertheless, to some extent, the state continued to keep authoritarian control over labour movements, which were seen as disturbing the peace and wellbeing of the society, the economic stability, and the national security (Kim, S. H. 2000).

In the meantime, women's importance in the labour movement began to decrease after the 1987 Struggles to some extent. In other words, female workers were pushed aside from the mainstream of the movement in the 1990s. Although Korean female workers were active in labour movements in the 1970s and 1980s, their union participation rate was very low from the beginning. In 1975, 15.8 per cent of the total female workforce had a union membership. It rose to 18.6 per cent in 1989 but declined significantly to 11.2 per cent in 1997 (Kang 2001:347). One major reason for this drastic decline in the 1990s is the large-scale of the economy's structure transformation - from female-concentrated manufacturing to capital and technology-based industries - following 'the Great Workers; Struggles' in 1987. Restructuring of their firms through overseas relocation of production, downsizing of the workforce, and expansion of sub-contractors or outsourced firms, significantly reduced the female workers' industrial bargaining power (Kang 2001:347-8). In addition, most of the student activists in support of female workers in production left the factories after the 1987 democratisation

movement. As a result, female workers' struggles were less powerful without their alliance with the student activists (Koo 2001:180).

Another important reason is related to the changes in the ways of union organisation (Kang 2001:364-7). Until the late 1980s, the labour movements were largely led by the enterprise-level unions but from the early 1990s these individual enterprise unions, including female-concentrated ones, joined the membership of the two nationwide trade unions FKTU and KCTU. In accordance with the expansion of male-dominated industries, including automobile and shipment, male workers accounted for a majority of the members in the two unions, taking up the major leadership as well. Therefore, asymmetric power balance between male and female members came to appear inside the unions. For instance, KCTU has a department of gender equality under its central organisation, but not in all of its regional branches. In addition, some regional branches were seen to have male members for leaders of the departments (Kang 2000:364-7). Kang In-Soon (2000:347) argues that it is necessary to have an independent department of gender equality in both central and regional union offices in order to protect women from employment discrimination in the Korean society in which gender discrimination is structurally internalised. She also says that Korean labour movements were successful in advancing the conditions producing class quality but not those for gender equality. She explains that both men and women workers took gender inequality in labour movements for granted because they were familiar with hierarchical gender relations in their everyday life (2000:483).

In addition, firms' attitudes toward a trade union changed significantly in the early 1990s. Private firms began to organise their

own collective labour units in order to keep a balance with organised trade unions. Facing the transition to the neo-liberal market operation, firms became more attracted to flexible use of labour in production because increases in labour costs and labour bargaining power was a big burden for them (Lee, J. S. 2002:81). In pursuit of the transition to the neo-liberal labour arrangement, employers, who had learned that workers' hostility against them was a significant obstacle in industrial bargaining in the late-1980s, wanted to create labour-friendly policies in workplaces and encourage workers to promote their collegueship through more social and training events (Koo 2001:193).

Moreover, firms perceived union leaders as their business collaborators who could be useful to work for them in the case of industrial bargaining. Therefore, many large firms attempted to eliminate union leaders' animosity toward them by offering leaders more employment incentives, including more opportunities for job promotion and training and more personal contracts. Koo argued that employers' new labour strategy, not repressing but promoting workers' harmony and solidarity through labour-friendly working environments, social events and capita-based personal contracts, was effective in diluting workers' class consciousness and in weakening labour's organising power inside workplaces (Koo 2001:190-92).

One of the most crucial changes to occur in the labour market during the 1990s was the emergence of the white-collar workers' labour movement. Until the late-1980s white collar workers were rarely active in union organisations because of the nature and condition of their jobs which were relatively more privileged than the blue-collar workers⁶⁸. Journalists, hospital clerical workers, financial workers

and other service-related clerical workers successfully organised their unions and contributed to democratising not only their workplaces but also the entire society. However, not all white-collar or service workers were able to take an easy road. Some, including teachers and public service workers, had great difficulties in organising their democratic representation and it was largely due to the state's opposition. In the eyes of the government, democratic social reform in education and the public sector could disturb the wellbeing of the society maintained under anti-communist and nationalist traditions (Koo 2002).

Notably, Kim's government led a rigorous nationwide globalisation campaign, called *Segyehwa*, referring to a comprehensive transformation of society requiring to efficiency and flexibility in all aspects of life and all areas of national life (Gills and Gills 2001:38). *Segyehwa* also embraced economic reform to meet global standards of practice (including transparency of all transactions, fair market competition, deregulation of the financial sector, and a fairer tax system), industrial relations reform, and political reform toward a more open competitive system. With an emphasis on economic growth by increasing Korea's international competitiveness, Kim's government proposed a labour reform based on two goals. They were reduction in the rigidity of the labour market and bringing Korea's labour practices up to international norms and ILO standards in preparation for OECD membership (Gills and Gills 2001:40). Finally, in favour of employers, the government announced new labour-reform bills in 1996. They include '(1) the right to substitute workers during labour disputes; (2) an end to payment of wages to full-time union officers starting in the year 2002; (3) endorsement of the "no work, no pay" provision; and (4) adoption of

flexible lay-offs and adjustments of working hours' (Kim and Moon 2000:60).

The bills also included some of labour's demands embracing multiple unionism at the industry and national levels but not in the enterprise level and school teachers' collective-bargaining rights from 1999 (Kim and Moon 2000:60). However, the two nationwide unions, KCTU and FKTU, opposed the bills. The sudden shift in labour managerial strategy to flexible labour operation was a great shock to Korean workers who were accustomed to life-long employment, high commitment to the firm and a senior-based wage system. Despite the labour-side's rigorous opposition, the government had the neo-liberal labour arrangements legalised at the end of 1996, shortly after becoming a member of OECD.

As a result, the government's forceful legal implementation of flexible labour arrangements in the labour market triggered large-scale labour strikes, and finally the 1997 general strike was arranged by two nationwide organised labour unions, FKTU and KTUC. The general strike successfully gained the populace's support and ended with some positive outcomes, including a two-year postponement of the lay-off system and continuous permission of labour unions' participation in political activities. However, the outbreak of the 1997 crisis changed the labour market situation as a whole, resulting in the labour market's easier adaptation to the neo-liberal labour policies with little resistance (Lee, J. S. 2002:80-6; Song 1999).

4.5.3 Social change and gender relations

The country's economic growth and the increase in real wages brought a relatively higher degree of economic affluence to the people over the last couple of decades. In addition, foreign popular culture and the capitalist value system, such as individualism and consumerism, was comprehensively introduced to the Korean society largely through movies, books, magazines, music, and foreign visitors. In 1989, the state liberalised overseas trips, which had been prohibited for the ordinary Korean people. Such opening-up policies boosted the number of Koreans travelling to foreign countries immediately and the direct importation of foreign culture.

As a consequence, the Korean conventional social norms and values have been changed to a great extent. For example, family traditions, such as filial piety and respect for the elderly, have been noticeably on the wane and a new notion of the family appeared as 'a place to rest' (Lie 1998:157-8). Therefore, the role of a family has extended to embracing not only 'survival' but also 'advancement' (Cho Han 2002:187). Parents, who experienced absolute poverty in their childhood and overcame economic difficulties by devoting themselves to the economy, preferred to identify themselves as middle class citizens in the society and did not want to pass the memories and experiences of their past poverty to their children⁶⁹. In addition, in family-related matters, children's education, specifically which school and which subject-area a degree was given from, became crucial, largely because of the increase in occupational competition.

Democratisation and the opening up of the society in the 1990s also drew the people's attention, especially middle class citizens, to various social issues, including environmental, gender, civil and human rights issues (Koo 2002:119). Accordingly, gender and sexuality-related disclosure began to be discussed more frequently in both private and public spheres and, particularly focused on redefining gender identity and sexuality in the feminist context. In search of the egalitarian notion of gender relationship, gender biases or differences in Korean formal and informal institutions - such as family, education, and military service - and sexuality-related issues were explored considerably. The issues of sexuality and gender equality in those institutions were increasingly discussed in association with the media, journalism, school, and civil groups. Consequently, girls and women of this decade, regardless of their social and economic status, became more aware of 'self-realisation', asserting that 'they wanted to be defined not by familial relations but as individuals'⁷⁰ (Cho Han 2002:179).

Yet, this growing awareness of gender and sexuality was generally accepted in the Korean society as long as it did not conflict with the society's traditional gender norms. In other words, in reality, the quest for redefining gender identity and sexuality was condemned by the ones who were enjoying their privileged position in the society if it appeared as disturbing the existing hierarchy and roles that benefited them. The changes that have been made in family, education, military and sexuality institutions in contemporary Korea are as follows.

Family. First, the male-lineage family system, *hojuje*, is persistently prevailing. Women's organisations have proposed the abolition of

the Family Law which disadvantages women in many respects. The Law was thus, partially amended in 1977, and more substantially in 1990. The key changes made in 1990 included expansion in a woman's right to inherit parental property and her deceased husband's property, and both husband and wife's equal right to any property acquired during marriage. The amended law also allows that child custody be determined by mutual agreement of the couple or, failing this by the family court, and no longer be granted automatically to the father⁷¹ (Kim, S. Y. 2000).

The current remaining issues of the system are that a single mother can not be the head of her own family so that she and her children need registering under the mother's male family or male relative's lineage at an official level. This is also similar to the case for divorced women⁷². When a Korean woman marries, she is transferred to her husband's registry. Upon divorce, the woman is transferred back to her family's registry, but her children are not transferred together with her although she has the custody right of her children. If the mother remarries, her name is registered under her new husband but her children must either remain on the registry of their biological father or be transferred to the step-father's registry but only with their biological father's surname (*Korea Times*, January 6 2004).

Moreover, the male family master system produces a significant employment difference between men and women in paid work. Korean firms usually offer workers some family-related employment benefits, including a family wage and housing loan with no or little interest. However, some firms give these benefits to workers who are officially registered as family heads. As a result, in many cases women are not able to enjoy the benefits, although they are the major

family breadwinner, because of their non-family head status in the official document. The Equal Employment Act prohibits such gender differences in terms of employment benefits, but this unfair employment practice is still apparent to some extent in the Korean labour market (Kim, M. K. 1999).

Secondly, marriage and family commitments are fundamental impediments to women's workforce participation because of the prevalence of the gender division of labour in households⁷³. Regardless of their paid work activities, women's responsibilities as family managers have hardly reduced. The survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality (henceforth MOGE) in 2001 shows the share of housework (cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, etc.) between a husband and wife. Among the total 1514 respondents, 590 persons, consisting of a combination of married men with non-wage working wives and married but non-wage working women, said that 89.4 per cent of housework was done by a housewife. On the other hand, 480 respondents, both married employed men and women, said that 78.1 per cent of housework was performed by women regardless of women's paid work. This implies that Korean women in paid work suffer from the double burdens of wage work and housework (MOGE 2001:66-7).

Furthermore, lack of institutional support, including an inadequate childcare system and little employment protection for married women, such as a maternity leave and flexible working time arrangement, also discourage married women's workforce participation to a large extent. Therefore, they usually tend to get involved in the informal sector jobs, which are relatively insecure, unstable, low-paid and non-regular. Low-paid service work, such as

shop sales and personal service clerical work, or home-based light-manufacturing work, is therefore attractive (KWWAU 1997). A majority of Korean women marry in their late 20s. In 2002, women aged over 30 made up 63.5 per cent of the total female wage workforce. Among them, only 23.7 per cent were employed as a regular worker and 48.3 and 28.0 per cent were employed on a temporary and daily basis respectively. Moreover, a large proportion of married women is engaged in unpaid family work. In the same year, 83.5 per cent of the total of unpaid family workers (both men and women) was women over the age of 30. In most cases, if women drop out of the workforce after their marriage and re-enter the labour market after spending a certain time period in playing full-time wifely, motherly, daughterly-in-law roles, their work experience, skill levels and schooling years before marriage are not usually taken into consideration in the wage system of such employment.

Education. Educational institutions have also reinforced the dichotomy of gender relations in Korea. The differences are largely shown as an unequal educational opportunity between males and females, a separation of schools by gender, and different school curricula, textbooks, and extra school activities (Kim 1991:256-58). First of all, an unequal educational opportunity by gender is often caused by parents' bias in considering education for daughters less important than that for sons in the household. For instance, the average period of education for men and women in 1995 was 11.18 and 9.37 years respectively, and each was advanced from 8.67 and 6.63 years in 1980. According to the national survey conducted by NSO in 2000, a large number of Korean people were not satisfied with their educational attainment. In the year of 1996, 75.9 and 82.7

per cent of male and female respondents respectively were not satisfied with their education level, and 19.6 of females described their parents' gender bias toward education as the main reason⁷⁴. This was much greater than 2.6 per cent of males (NSO 2001).

Moreover, the separation of school between boys and girls has been dominant in Korea, especially for middle and high school education. This separated sphere of education by gender is seen to stress differences in gender roles and identities, coincident with the Confucian patriarchy norm, *namnyeoyubyeol*⁷⁵, referring to the differences in gender roles and living spheres (Kim 1991:258). In terms of school curricula, until 1995, middle and high schools offered business and industrial courses only for male students and home management courses only for girls. Primary and secondary school textbooks have also included various elements emphasising the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The current school textbooks, the seventh revision after the first publication, are said to be less gender-biased compared to the previous ones. However, they persistently include different roles and images of men and women, for instance, males as producers, and females as consumers and caretakers. In addition, in the historical textbooks, men are extensively represented as historically important people. In terms of men and women's occupations represented in the textbooks, men are over-represented in most occupations except those of nurses and housewives⁷⁶ (Chung and Kim 2002).

Nonetheless, enlargement of educational opportunities for women has contributed to an increase in the number of women with secondary and tertiary education in the workforce. For example, the respective percentage of female workers with high school and over

two-year college degrees among the total workforce in 1980 was 14.5 and 2.5 per cent, but each increased to 39.7 and 19.2 per cent in 2000 (NSO 2003). However, it should be noted that Korean women with higher education have very low workforce participation despite the steady increase in the number of them in paid work over time (Brinton et al. 1995; Keum 2002:18-19).

Table 4.1 Workforce participation rates by level of education attainment and gender for 25 to 64-year-olds, 2000 (per cent)

		Below middle school	High school	2-year college	4-year college	Total
Korea	Male	84	89	94	91	88
	Female	61	53	58	56	57
OECD	Male	77	88	92	93	86
Country	Female	50	70	80	83	65
Mean						

Source: OECD, 2002. *Education at a Glance*.

As represented in Table 4.1, Korea marked the lowest workforce participation of women with a college degree among 30 OECD member countries in 2000. Additionally, their workforce participation appeared lower than that of primary and middle school graduates (OECD 2003)⁷⁷.

One of the reasons for female college graduates' lower workforce participation compared to male college graduates in Korea is related to the fields of study which women are crowded in (Kang and Shin 2001:219; Lee, J. H. 1996b). In Korea traditional gender stereotypes still affect boys and girls in selecting a school major. As a result, a large proportion of women major in a limited number of subjects,

regarded as having feminine tendencies, such as language and literature, arts, teaching, home economy and nursing. In the job market these subjects are not demanded in the labour market as much as the ones that men are crowded into, such as business management, trade, and engineering. Therefore, female students' over-representation in a small number of academic disciplines, which are less industrial skill-based than those for men, is a crucial factor in lowering women's employment.

Military. The strong security ideology has produced a militaristic masculinist identity based upon male soldiery, and it has been exceedingly valued as patriotic nationalism (Cho Han 2000). Such gendered militaristic nationalism portrayed women as subjected beings in terms of not only security but also other activities within the political and economic arenas, and further, legitimated women's inferiority to men in the whole society (Choi 1998: 20). In particular, militarism has been fundamental to the construction of gender hierarchy and segregation in workplaces. Almost every Korean man is required to serve the military by law. Two or three years of military experience effectively socialise men into a highly disciplined collective life and, as a result, they tend to adapt to hierarchical industrial organisation, which is also created by militarised men (Koo 2001:47). Thus, the notion of women as secondary or dependent citizens is more dominant in workplaces affected by militaristic male dominance.

The arrangement, an exchange of military service for economic or political privilege, has been common in many countries but it appears more extensive and explicit in the Korean case (Kim, H. M. 1999; Moon 2001a:94). In order to organise the national economy

around conscription as a way to motivate men, the state law dictates that men gain extra points for military service if they apply for lower-level public sector jobs. Although this law is not applied to private companies, the state has encouraged them to be more favourable to men with military experience. Construction of military service as a source of economic benefits is seen as a state's strategy to reduce the tension that the individuals may have between the mandatory military service and the individuals' desire to work for a better living condition.

Sexuality. The major focus of sexuality-related discourses was on the double standard of sexual norms between formal and non-formal systems, and between men and women in Korean society (Chang Yoon 1999:46, Cho Han 1998:229). Sexual relations in marriage are perceived as being only formal (or appropriate) within Korean economic, legal, and social systems. However, non-formal sexual relations exist in the society to a large extent. For instance, prostitution and sex-related entertainment businesses are prohibited by the laws but have prevailed across the country for decades⁷⁸. Within this systematic double standard of sexual norms in Korean society, there also exists a rigid divide between male and female sexual norms. Linked to the traditional Confucian patriarchal gender norms, keeping sexual virginity before marriage and chastity after marriage is constantly perceived as an important value for women in contemporary Korea, while it is generally not the same case for men. Therefore, women's sexual relations outside marriage are negatively sanctioned. This double standard of sexual norms has maintained men's sexual repression over women in public and private living spheres, making women vulnerable to various types of sexual violence, including rape, abuse, harassment, and trafficking.

Based on the recognition that women's oppressed sexuality reinforces patriarchal male dominance in Korea, women's sexual liberalisation and dismantling of the double standard of sexual norms in the society came to be discussed more actively among feminist scholars, writers, and female organisations since the late 1980s⁷⁹ (Chang Yoon 1999:50; Cho Han 1998:229). Many efforts have been made to bring discussion on sexuality-related issues from the informal (private) to the formal (public) arena. For instance, the issues of sexual violence against women, including rape, prostitution, abuse, and harassment, began to be openly discussed in public. With the support of feminist scholars and activists, female victims of sexual violence have brought their cases to a court of justice. On the other hand, the need for the laws and policies for punishment and prevention of prostitution has been highlighted in public, and the bills on them have been waiting to be legislated. In the case of the punishment and prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace, the bill was finally legislated and included in the Equal Employment Act of 1999. The Act says that sexual harassment in the workplace is a form of gender discrimination in employment, which is prohibited by the law (Kim, E. L. 1999:75).

The reason why Koreans' conservative tendency has remained largely intact can be also found within the country's political context, especially related to the unchanged nature of institutionalised politics (Moon 2002b). Moon outlines two aspects of the masculinist nature of Korean politics: first, 'the cultural perception of politics as a realm of men who are free from housework and caring/nurturing labour'; second, 'the common tendency in national and international politics to prioritise issues concerning the military, foreign policy,

and economic growth and to ignore (or ghettoise) issues regarding power relations in privatised social relations of gender and sexuality' (2002b:37). After all, women's empowerment was largely encouraged as long as it was useful for men to promote women's motherly, wifely, daughterly, daughterly-in law, and the secondary workers' roles in the labour market.

Regarding the prevalence of patriarchy in contemporary Korea, Cho Han points out the passive role of the Korean feminist movement in the past in terms of its failure to challenge patriarchal family and marriage systems (1998:189-90). Until the 1980s, the themes of the women's feminist movement were closely linked to class struggles and democratisation of the society. In their movement, however, some important gender issues, such as patriarchal family system and women's struggles derived from their dual labour duty of both household and paid work, were often treated less significantly. One of the reasons for this is seen as the personal background of feminist activities at that time. These women were middle or upper class women, mostly with a domestic or foreign undergraduate or postgraduate degree. Among them were some with a strong progressive tendency who remained single and led the women's liberalisation movement extensively. There also was a group of women who were freer from their caring and nurturing responsibilities in households because of their family members' support or better-off family economic conditions, and thereby they did not pay enough attention to women's subordination to men in households. As a result, their movement was often perceived as rich women's struggles, and it failed to gain a broad support from not only men but also women, specifically low-class working women struggling between their family and paid work duties.

Cho Han also argues that commercialisation of women's sexuality and bodies led by global capitalism and mass media in Korea over recent decades played a significant role in creating this homogenising trend of women's status and image established on the basis of their bodily beauty (1998:288). The increases in workers' real wages since the late 1980s resulted in expanding the Korean consumer market. Korean women, the major household managers, appeared as major consumers in the eyes of both domestic and foreign capitalists. As has happened in many other capitalist countries, one of the capitalists' strategies to catch female consumers' attention in Korea was to underline the importance of the caring and nurturing of women's physical beauty through the mass media (Bae 1999:155). Women's bodily beauty appeared to be their important power generator in terms of making personal relationships with other people and further, making contacts with various social and economic institutions, including the work organisation.

Particularly, the prevalence of such a 'beauty myth' in work organisations has forced women to have not only necessary job skills but also bodily beauty for job competition with men. Therefore, the reality that women's bodily beauty is treated as a form of job licence is said to be another type of female oppression that the labour market imposes on women (Lee, Y. J. 1997). Despite the criticism, this commercialised 'beauty myth' (*Woemojisangjuui*) was embraced by many Korean women who found it a way to express themselves to others more confidently in the public sphere (Bae 1999:155). For instance, bodily beauty was seen as a means of empowerment for working women who lacked self-confidence at work because of their inferior status, or for housewives who felt isolated from the outside

world. As a consequence, various beauty industries, including cosmetics, plastic surgery, fashions, and diets have made enormous profits in contemporary Korea.

Labour Market. Firms, both public and private, also have a deep-rooted patriarchal tradition. Discriminatory employment practices, exclusion and segregation are two major methods to marginalise women in employment (Choi, S. A. 2000). In many cases jobs are segregated by gender from the entry level to exit level, including hire, job allocation, promotion, training, wages, retirement and dismissal (Chang 1994; Kim, E. L. 1999; Lee, J. W. 2002; McKinsey 2001:81; Shin and Kang 2002:118). For instance, in the hiring process, Korean firms often exclude women from entering men's jobs by putting gender restrictions explicitly or implicitly in job advertisements, or by applying male favourable selection criteria in hiring decision-making processes. For another instance, in job advertisements firms overtly say that they seek men and women separately for different tasks. One of the criteria that is often used to advantage men in the hiring process is to give extra points in job competition for public sector jobs to men who had completed their military service⁸⁰. On the other hand, it often occurs that during job interviews employers ask female applicants some questions that are not relevant to their official job requirements. For instance, they include some personal questions, such as how many years later they plan to marry, or if they are willing to perform extra tasks, such as cleaning the office and serving tea or coffee for other employees (*The Labour News*, 11 April 2003).

Some firms even differentiate female applicants by their physical appearance in terms of the face, height, and weight and other restrictions such as age, educational attainment, and marital status

(Cho 1999:130-32; Kim, E. L. 1999)⁸¹. Because firms hire women for additional or assistant tasks in many cases, such as secretary, bookkeeping, typewriting, or unskilled manufacturing jobs, they tend to prefer young, good-looking, lower-educated, and single female employees. Young, pretty, female workers are traditionally considered as 'flowers' of workplaces, especially in the workplaces men dominate (Lee, J. W. 2002). Firms' preference for particular physical appearances of women has seriously increased women's consciousness of how they look and, as a result, has increased the use of cosmetics and even plastic surgery (Kang and Shin 2001:120).

Moreover, firms are likely to avoid hiring higher-educated female graduates. While reduction in wage costs can be one reason, some firms prefer young, lower-educated women because they tend to be more submissive to male authorities in workplaces. In many cases of female office clerks, they are expected to perform some additional jobs, such as cleaning, photocopying, and serving refreshments to male colleagues and clients, as well as their major task. These types of informal jobs apparently bring double burdens to female employees. However, employers tend to take this for granted and give poor employment evaluation if women are slow to complete their major jobs because of the informal tasks (Kang and Shin 2001:179).

According to research done by the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI), in 100 enterprises with the top sales records in 1997, only 42 per cent allocated women to all tasks as equally as men (McKinsey 2002:87). However, 50 per cent of them offered some tasks only to men and eight per cent of them had female only tasks, such as a secretary and assistant jobs. Engaged in occupations requiring

less skill and responsibility, Korean women normally obtain fewer opportunities for promotion, movement to high-profile tasks, job training, and upgrading of their employment record by good business achievement. Importantly, the existence of a glass ceiling hindering women's promotion appears inside corporations and thus women are little seen in managerial or high-profile positions (Kang and Shin 2001:197).

MOGE⁸² conducted a survey in 2001 to investigate how Korean people perceived women's life and work (MOGE 2001:93). According to the question of gender discrimination in employment, specifically in terms of promotion, 78.4 per cent out of the total male and female 1535 respondents perceived that women were not promoted as equally as men in workplaces. A larger number of women (84.0 per cent) responded positively to an unfavourable promotion system for women compared to men (76.6 per cent). To the question of why women are discriminated against in terms of promotion, many respondents said that male preference was an important reason. In other words, the perception that men are better suited for managerial or high-profiled positions than are women is dominant and, as a result, people feel uncomfortable about female managers.

In 2001, *Yeoseongminwuhoi* (Womenlink) conducted a survey examining unfair employment practices in the Korean labour market⁸³. The number of respondents was 838 female workers from 30 different firms, including banks, hotels, and public firms. To the question of the factors disadvantaging women's job promotion, a majority of the respondents (41.4 per cent) chose male preference by their company management as the most important factor. To the following question, as to how this personal gender preference could

be represented in the decision-making process for promotion, the respondents (54.4 per cent) offered the explanation that the most important item affecting the decision-making was the decision-makers' personal opinion about the candidates, rather than personnel records showing employees' work performance.

Finally, the wage level for Korean women has always been lower than that for men but the gap has been steadily narrowed down over the years. In terms of the average wage level of the total industry, the ratio of women to men was as low as 44.2 per cent in 1975 but later changed to 63.5 per cent in 2002⁸⁴ (NSO 2003). In the manufacturing industry's case, the gap between men and women remains wider than that of the total industry. This is largely because a majority of female workers in the manufacturing sector is occupied in the industries with high labour intensity, including textile and apparel industries. Amongst all manufacturing industries, the two industries, textile and apparel offered the lowest wages in 2002, with textile at 76.2 per cent and apparel at 66.0 per cent of the average wage level of the total manufacturing sector.

The wage gap by gender differs considerably depending on the level of education. In 2002 the ratio of female high school graduates to their male counterparts' wage was 66.8 per cent, but that of women to men with a university degree was 73.7 per cent. The fact that the wage difference is smaller between men and women with a college education compared to those with non-tertiary education proves that education plays a considerable role in reducing gender difference in employment.

Tae-Hong Kim (2000) examined causes of wage differences by gender in the Korean labour market. He used years of schooling and work experience to estimate the level of productivity, which is supposed to account for rational market reasons differentiating wage levels of individual workers. In addition, he put workers' marital status, types of occupations and industries and sizes of firms in the category of employee and employer differences. For the analysis, he chose a sample 10 per cent from the total data of both male and female workers' wages of 1998, provided by the Ministry of Labour in Korea. Then, he analysed them by giving different log values to the independent market variables, including productivity and employee and employer differences.

Table 4.2 Causes of the wage gap by gender (per cent)

	1995	1998
Differences caused by rational reasons	44.9	52.5
Productivity	22.9	29.2
Years of education	8.8	9.9
Years' of working period	21.1	26.3
Personal and employers' differences	14.9	16.2
Differences caused by non-rational reasons	55.1	47.5

Source: The Ministry of Labour, 1998-99, 2000. *Monthly Report of the Labour Statistical Survey*, Korea.

Adapted from Kim, T. H. 2000. *Research Paper on Changes in Korean Women's employment Structure and Future Policy Recommendations*, Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI), Seoul.

In analysing the data the wage differences caused by those two factors were regarded as differences by rational reasons⁸⁵. On the other hand, the differences in wages between men and women, despite the same productivity and employee and employer differences were seen as an outcome produced by non-rational reasons, that is, discrimination. The result was that in 1998, 47.5 per cent of differences were caused by discrimination, while 52.5 per cent

were caused by rational reasons, including years of schooling (9.9 per cent), years of work experience (26.3 per cent), employee and employer differences (16.2 per cent). Compared to 1995, the importance of the human capital-related elements in terms of wage determination rose from 44.9 per cent to 52.5 percent in 1998.

4.6 The outbreak of the crisis and revival of gendered nationalism for the sake of rescuing the troubled economy

The outbreak of the 1997 economic crisis was a great shock for Korean people, who always believed that the economic prosperity, brought by the long-lasting economic growth over a few decades, would continue permanently. The day when the former President Kim Yung-Sam signed the IMF's Memorandum of Understanding was often described as 'the worst national humiliation day', and 'the day that Korea became colonised by the world capital' by the local press (Choe 1997). While the people were feeling somewhat shameful or desperate about the nation's economy, the political leadership constantly appealed to them for cooperation with the state-led economic recovery plan derived from the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). In his nationwide speech, President Kim said, 'It is time to tighten our belt again. The coming economic restructuring will involve bone-carving pain. But we must show the world our determination that we can overcome the crisis.' (CNN, 2 February 1998). The newly inaugurated President Kim Dae-Jung in early 1998 also called for the full support of Koreans to overcome the crisis and pledged to relieve the country from the pain caused by the crisis.

The state's efforts to mobilise the people in terms of overcoming the economic difficulties were mostly made on the basis of the people's patriotic sentiments. The gold collection campaign, launched by a bank and state-run TV in early 1998, was one of the public events that successfully drew people's support. A number of Koreans, including children, parents, and overseas Koreans, lined up to sell their personal gold jewellery regardless of the less-than-market price and wished to make a contribution in terms of raising badly needed dollars. The three-month long campaign was officially closed with the outcome that the collected gold in total was an estimated 2,000 tons and it was worth 20 billion dollars, US⁸⁶ (*Joseon Ilbo*, 9 October 1998c). In addition, another popular campaign at that time involved encouraging the consumption of Korean domestic products and discouraging the consumption of foreign imported products and overseas traveling. As a result of a series of such campaigns, imports of foreign capital and consumer goods, as well as of raw materials, fell by as much as 35.4 per cent in 1998 compared to the previous year, and it was the largest import reduction in history (*Hankyoreh*, 4 January 1999).

However, this does not mean that all members of the nation subscribe to the same patriotic behaviour. Patriotism is described as 'the cultural processes of making distinction between people within a nation' (Nelson 2001:167). Sometimes, the distinctions may become a cause of conflict among people in a nation if some people become too obsessed with the way they practise their patriotism, and thus often exercise exclusive or violent tendencies against others who behave differently from them. This type of conflict also appeared in Korea during the crisis-affected period. It was common that people who

did not participate in the gold campaign or used foreign imported products for any reason were blamed for their lack of patriotism or for anti-patriotic behaviour⁸⁷ (Cho Han 1998:320).

Nelson claimed, 'Roles broadly deemed appropriate for South Korean women in maintaining the nation and claiming national identity by right of patriotic living were distinctively gendered' (2001:168). Faced with an unprecedented and increasing number of unemployed, all members of society began to tremble and feel insecure. Unemployed household heads had a particularly difficult time, especially if they were the only income source of the family. During this time the television news and newspapers vigorously reported various stories about family members showing their support and love to their male household heads. For instance, there were news articles entitled, 'Five Commandments to get your husband high-spirited: treat him like a king!' ⁸⁸ (*Kookmin Ilbo*, 10 December 1997), 'Give more pocket money to your husband, especially when he is in difficulty' (*Joseon Ilbob*, 06 January 1998), and 'Cheer up, Daddy! We are with you!' (*Dongah Ilbo*, 14 November 1998).

As shown in the examples, almost of all news stories had an assumption that household breadwinners were men; therefore, wives and children were supposed to show their support and love to their male family head. However, women who were suffering from unemployment rarely appeared in these news articles or television news reports, as the ones that also needed other family members' support and love just like the male heads. According to the national survey in 1995, women accounted for 16.6 per cent of the total household heads, mostly breadwinners of their households (KWDI

2000). In addition, in 1998 over 40 per cent of the national total employed persons were women and their financial contribution to their family living costs appeared considerable⁸⁹.

This gender-differentiated social phenomenon largely derives from the rigid gender role dichotomy, women not as breadwinner in the household but as household manager. In fact, many families in Korea, especially middle-class ones, had a life pattern based upon the dichotomised gender roles between a husband and wife⁹⁰. Thus, for families depending on a single main paycheck, their male household head's unemployment was devastating. To a large extent, the husband's unemployment sometimes appeared as more of a crisis for the wives whose life relied completely on her husband's income (Kim and Finch 2002). Wives had to deal with the fear and panic created by the loss of their family income. To make it worse, some of them went through a more difficult time because the unemployed husband got angry and began to use physical and verbal violence to her at home (*Daehan Maeil*, 18 May 1998:13)⁹¹. However, the whole society paid little attention to the wives' struggles but was only telling them to understand the husband with support and love.

Contrary to the state discourse, family patriarchy, with 'the husband as breadwinner and wife as housewife' was critically undermined as a result of the economic crisis. In many cases, wives had to enter the labour market to sustain their family⁹². Nevertheless, women newly entering the labour market were mostly destined to the secondary occupations with more flexibility, offering low wages, and poor employment benefits and rights (Kim 2001; Shin 2001). Despite the breakdown of the traditional gender roles at the family level to some extent, the economic crisis apparently reinforced the patriarchal

gender relations in Korean society. The male breadwinner ideology became more dominant in the labour market and thus women in the dual income family were first to be discharged. Over all, male dominance over female at work reinforced the idea that men should be given priority in employment regardless of workers' performance or marital status.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the history of Korea's political, economic, and social changes over the twentieth century with close attention to the gendered processes of social transformation. Throughout Japanese colonisation, the Korean War, the post colonial and post war nation building, and compressed capitalist development, new definitions of manhood and womanhood were introduced in Korean society. Men's role came to primarily involve the production of a modern society, taking the responsibility for the task of adjusting to and participating in the external world of material activity. Meanwhile, women's domestic roles, including reproducing and maintaining the producers in the internal material world, were highlighted. Such gendered modernity successfully penetrated Korean society, in which the dichotomy of patriarchal gender roles and identities had been historically prevailing. As a result, despite the expansion of women's formal education and workforce participation in industrial production, women's wifely and motherly roles (potential or real) have been perceived as their prior tasks. This rigid gender division of labour has persistently reinforced male dominant employment structure, shaping women's secondary workforce status in the Korean labour market.

Gender hierarchy in contemporary Korea is based on the elements of both traditional (neo-Confucian) and modern (liberal capitalist) gender norms. This thesis takes a view that the Korean leadership has used the traditional neo-Confucian governance in reconstructing the individual's national identity in the process of post colonial and post war nation building. For the nation-state's legitimacy and stability of society, the state continued to maintain the traditional form of gender hierarchy, as well as class hierarchy. This gendered social transformation proceeded over the country's militarisation and compressed industrialisation. The state's two priorities, anti-communism and economic growth, effectively elevated gendered nationalism, which was employed to mobilise a discourse of hard work and personal sacrifice in the name of national development. In the process, a woman's dual roles became more apparent, involving roles of a dutiful daughter, devoted wife and mother and low-wage flexible worker.

This gendered nationalism became even more dominant with the occurrence of the crisis and the need to rescue the troubled economy. In the process of the SAP-based restructuring, a public discourse of personal sacrifice in employment became pervasive. In addition, for the maintenance of a stable and harmonious social order the dichotomy of gender roles shown as a producer-husband and dependent-housewife were stressed and, as a result, men were often given priority in employment. This chapter provides an historical understanding of the gendered structure of employment and employment practices in the contemporary Korean labour market, discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

³³ Oakley (1972:16) defines gender as 'a matter of culture', referring to the social classification 'masculine' and 'feminine'. She argues that cultural origins of gender implying the definition of masculinity and femininity vary across time and space and location. In addition, Sherry Ortner (1974:67) asserts, 'the specific cultural conceptions and symbolisation of women are extraordinarily diverse and even mutually contradictory' and hence the treatment of women, their status, and their contribution to society differ tremendously from one culture to another (Schech and Haggis 2000:86).

³⁴ In 372 a Confucian academy reportedly was established in Korea, specifically in the kingdom of *Goguryeo*. Confucian classics were prevailing throughout the periods of three kingdoms, United *Silla*, and *Goryeo* until the late 13th century. The transmission of neo-Confucianism to Korea was via Mongol by the close marital relationships that existed between the Mongol imperial house and the royal family of *Goryeo*. For more details of the history of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, see Martina Deuchler's *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: a study of society and ideology* published in 1992.

³⁵ This coincides with the view that a national identity which unites people and distinguishes them from outsiders is important for the justification of the nation-state's legitimacy and it is often based on shared history, experience, cultural practices, and universally accepted norms by all the citizens (Smith 1995).

³⁶ The hierarchical relationship and different nature between Korean men and women could be found from the very beginning of the country's history (Moon 1994:39-40). According to the myth telling the foundation of Korean nationhood (called *Dangunsinhwa*), the origin of Korean women is a bear that successfully turned into a female after spending 100 restrained days in a dark cave, only eating garlic and a herb. The patient bear-woman, called *Ungnyeo*, married *Hwanung*, the heavenly lord, and begot the legendary founder of Korea, *Dangun*. The gender implication of the myth can be seen that while the man comes from the heaven, his female counterpart is of sub-human origins. The fact that the bear endured the severe restraints and ordeals for 100 days in order to become a human female, married the man from the heaven and produced a son for the nation implies the profound social meaning of Korean womanhood. In other words, the myth implicitly presents the message that gender differences based upon patriarchal hierarchy existed from the foundation of the Korean nation as the community of men.

³⁷ It is said that patriarchy was not dominant and women had a relatively better social status during the *Goryeo* era (918-1392) prior to the *Joseon* Dynasty. In households women could be the official head of their family and the successor of the family inheritance. This was possible mainly because women appeared to be economically more independent during this era (Kim, S. H. 2002:242-43)

³⁸ In accordance with the separate living sphere between men and women in tradition, a husband and wife are called, outside person (*bakkatsaram*) for a husband and inside person (*ansaram*) for a wife.

³⁹ *Naehun* (instructions for women) was the most important and influential textbook for women, compiled in 1475. As well as virtuous women's duties, the book also taught girls the four basics of womanly behaviour, including moral conduct, proper speech, proper appearance, and womanly tasks. According to these basics, women need not have great talents, rhetorical talents, be beautiful, or

be clever. In addition to this, there was an illustrated collection of stories, called *Samgang haengsildo*, about the proper application of the three social principles for both men and women: faithful minister, filial son, and chaste women (Deuchler 1992:257).

⁴⁰ In the upper *yangban* households women did not have to do labour work, including cooking and cleaning, because their family-owned slaves did these domestic chores. Meanwhile, women in the *yangban* class with a mid or low-level of wealth were engaged in both family-caring and income-earning activities (Kim, S. H. 2002:74-6).

⁴¹ For the details of 'Asian-style democracy' discussed by institutionalists political economists, see Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The growth of industrial policy, 1925-75* (Stanford University, California) and Meredith Woo-Cumings, 'The "New Authoritarianism" in East Asia', 1994. *Current History*, 93:587:413-16.

⁴² There was, however, some criticism of crony capitalism in Asia prior to the 1997 crisis. For instance, see Byeong-Seok Park (1995) 'Political corruption in South Korea: concentrating on the dynamics of party politics', *Asian Perspective* 19 (Spring/summer):163-93; Richard Mitchell (1996) *Political Bribery in Japan*, University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

⁴³ In response to such claims from conservative neo-liberals, some scholars, including Burkett and Hart-Landsberg (1998) argued that corruption, authoritarianism, and regimentation in Asia were certainly endorsed economically by powerful global market actors such as the U.S. and Japan. These countries sought regional political stability and alluring opportunities for their transnational corporations and financial investors. Hence, they found Asian countries with an authoritarian government useful as authoritarianism helped to repress labour and other popular opposition movements, and as a result, helped to ensure their profit interests and to keep ruling coalitions together.

⁴⁴ This argument is closely associated with the debate between some feminists and cultural relativists regarding whether or not women's rights are universal human rights. For the details of this debate see Binion (1995), Brems (1997), and Fraser (1999).

⁴⁵ Kim (1999) suggests an ironic example of heterogeneity of East Asian culture by using Malaysia and Singapore. Mahathir and Lee Kuan Yew are both well known as 'Asian Value' advocates but their countries are influenced by various cultural elements, including Islamic, Confucian, and Buddhist.

⁴⁶ Haggard and others (1997) have argued that Korea's political independence, rather than Japanese occupation, was an important factor in subsequent growth. This argument relies on the evidence that the growth record under Japanese occupation was more modest than is often thought and there are greater discontinuities than continuities between the colonial and post war eras. For the details, see Haggard, S., Kang, D. and Moon, J. I. 1997. 'Japanese colonialism and Korean development: a critique', *World Development*, 25(6):867-81.

⁴⁷ Peter Petri combined two theories that explain the East Asian countries' economic success. They are 'the analogy of flying geese' and 'product cycle theory'. (See Bernard, M. and Ravenhill, J. 1995. 'Beyond product cycle and flying geese: regionalization, hierarchy, and the industrialisation of East Asia', *World Politics*, 47 (2):171-209). See also Cumings, B., 1984. 'The Origins and development of the

northeast Asian political economy: industrial sector, product cycles and political consequences', *International Organisation*, 38(1):1-40.

⁴⁸ A family system similar to *hojuje* is found in both *Goryeo* (936-1391 BC) and *Joseon* dynasties. The family system was designed mainly for the taxation purpose. However, it did not have any legal effect until the Japanese government put it into the law (Kim, S. Y. 2000). See Section 4 for the details of *hojuje*.

⁴⁹ A common employment pattern for a Japanese woman is to leave a job if she marries or has children and return to work after her children get old enough to go to school (Brinton 1988; Han 2000). As a result, women's employment participation in their lifetime shows an M-curve with a double peak, the first peak in their early twenties and the second peak in their forties. This pattern makes it possible for employers to hire young women before their marriage at lower pay and lower status and re-hire them in their forties as a flexible lower pay part-time workforce. The main reason for Japanese women's M-curve workforce participation is seen as cultural expectations that stress a woman's role as mother and wife (Broadbent 2003:8-14). Western beliefs, especially American-style democratic ideals, influenced the discourse of women's movements in Japan. However, it has been said that western notions based on individualism and pluralism are not successful in changing national traditional values with a focus on consciousness of hierarchy and loyalty to the family, work organisation, and state (Gelb and Palley 1994:3).

⁵⁰ Despite a great deal of neo-Confucian influence on the modern Korean statehood, the authoritarian characteristics of the leadership in the modern state appeared completely different from the neo-Confucian way of leadership. For instance, according to Confucian orthodoxy, the ruler is to rule not by force, but by his virtue, acquired through the practice, promotion, and regulation of rites, literature, and music (Kim 1993:164).

⁵¹ Moon said that it was only with the rise of the capitalist economy that masculinity becomes tightly interwoven with the financial ability to provide for family (2002b:84-8).

⁵² Initially, this modern image of women's domesticity in an industrial family was a Japanese influence, especially *Meiji* Japan. It considers the ideal wife as 'the women who took care of all the domestic chores, economised on the family budget, kept the house clean at all times, knew her husband's every thought, and when conversing with her husband, maintained a smiling face like a blossoming flower' (Cho Han 2002:173).

⁵³ *Hoju* is not necessarily the same as a household head, an individual who is a legal representative of a household. A household is a physical unit in which the members are not always from the same family. The ones who reside in the same house make a household and one of them becomes a household head. More discussion of *hojuje* is shown in Section 4.5.

⁵⁴ In her article, 'Masculinity and femininity in the construction of a new order of peace', Christine Sylvester considers that these factory women are affected by a masculine, economic world order that thrusts burdens and responsibilities on women with little recompense (2000). She wrote, 'International export electronics of Malaysia and Korea, as well as the exporting garment industries of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Zimbabwe, and Bangladesh, rely on women workers who are paid less and promoted less often than the men working with them (2000:91)'.

⁵⁵ The two industrial cities, *Masan* and *Iri*, are two FEZs in Korea. *Masan* FEZ has been a leading centre of Korean light industry and a major employer of young women.

⁵⁶ On the contrary, men were predominantly occupied in heavy and chemical-manufacturing industries, which offered more-skilled jobs, better wages and other working conditions compared to women-dominated industries. In his book, *Korean Labour Movement and the State*, Choi Jang Jip said that the concentration of women workers was more apparent in the occupations that required lower skill levels (1989:70).

⁵⁷ Lett argued because Korea did not experience the growth of trade and manufacture over an extended period of time prior to industrialisation, the old class system was inherited to the new capitalist class system without any critical transformation (1998:202). Therefore, the Korean industrial workers, particularly at the early stage of industrialisation, had no culture and institutional basis on which to shape a positive self-identity, including 'no culture of mutuality, no sense of pride in workmanship, no cherishing of autonomy and independence' (Koo 2001:11).

⁵⁸ Kim Seung-Kyung's study, examining women workers' life in export-oriented factories, showed that the topmost reason for factory girls to starting working was for own education. Education normally provides access to better-paying and better-status jobs, largely seen as office work, in the Korean labour market. Factory girls' desire to attain higher education was also related to their marriage, seen as a strategy for social mobility. With a high school or college degree, they wished to meet a partner with a better-status job (1997:66-8).

⁵⁹ Other ways that the state honoured industrial workers, both male and female workers, were by labelling them as 'builders of industry' (*sanupui yokkun*) and 'the leading force of exports' (*suchul ui gisu*) (Koo 2001:12; Kim, S. K. 2000:5; Cho Han 2002).

⁶⁰ The state had absolute control over economic resources and channelled them into growth industries by providing financial and non-financial assistance to favoured firms (Eckert 1993:102; Lie 1998:80). With the state's incentives, those firms were able to make strategic investments and projects, establish economies of scale, compete with foreign firms and capital, take up foreign investment and technology, and over all, maximise exports. The state's market intervention created the critical environment for a certain number of conglomerates, called *jaebeols*, to grow asymmetrically. Too much capital and power concentration on *jaebeols* discouraged the growth of small to medium sized firms. The concentration of those conglomerates' economic power could be seen by the fact that the combined sales of the top ten *jaebeols* as a percentage of Gross National Product accounted for 48 per cent by 1980 (Lie 1998:91). Furthermore, the collusive ties between the government party and the business community made exchanges of funds and political favours common. Funds were usually given to the government elites as a token of appreciation for keeping a tight leash on labour disputes or creating a favourable business environment (Park 1997).

⁶¹ However, the state's political repression and policies causing unequal distribution of income resulted in intensifying Korean unions' militant tendencies (Song 1999).

⁶² As shown in chapter 1, patriarchy refers to a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit, and patriarchal production relations prevail within not only the household but also paid work.

⁶³ Korean women's active participation in labour movements appeared unusual compared with the participation of foreign factory girls engaged in the international production system of other developing countries. Factory girls, perceived as 'factory daughters' or 'filial workers', tended to be submissive to their patriarchal and capitalist authorities in general. For the question of what factor accounts for Korean female workers' distinctive role in the labour movement during this time period, Koo singles out the special linkage between women workers in production and progressive Christian church organisation in Korea (2001:94-5).

⁶⁴ In the 1980s a great number of radical university students participated in factory work as disguised workers and associated with workers, mainly aiming to raise workers' political consciousness and help them organise themselves in effective unions. The ultimate goal for student-turned-workers was to strengthen worker and student solidarity based upon the same ideologies and strategies and to make an alliance of power fighting against the authoritarian state and capitalists (Koo 2001:104-5).

⁶⁵ There was one social movement, called *minjung* movement, and it occurred outside the industrial area but had enormous influence on the unionisation of the working class. It emerged in the mid 1970s and became more active in the 1980s. The movement was mainly led by students and progressive intellectuals and aimed to mobilise workers and farmers in the struggles for political and economic democratisation. Koo considered the *minjung* movement as 'a class-based political movement' because class inequality, including widening wage gaps and intensifying class relations, was an important motive of the emergence of the movement. However, he considered the movement as representing 'a political articulation', not a simple economic protest, because the processes occurring at the political level were important themes of the movement. To look at the nature of the state is critical. Therefore, according to Koo, the *minjung* phenomenon can be understood as a 'manifestation of the particular relationships existing between the state and social classes in contemporary South Korea' (2001:145).

⁶⁶ The annual wage increase rate from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s was higher than 10 per cent each year, and women's wages increased relatively higher than that for men. For instance, each of men and women's wages increased annually as high as 12.2 and 15.5 per cent from 1985 to 1989, and 13.2 and 16.2 per cent from 1990 to 1994 (MOLAB 2003).

⁶⁷ KWWAU emerged as a nationwide female-only union in 1992. The former bodies of KWWAU are Women Workers' Associations in Seoul created in the 1970s which led the democratic trade union movement and regional women workers' associations that were formed in export concentrated sectors, industrial complexes and low income areas across the nation. In 1989, these Women Workers' Associations began to undertake collective organisational policy development, research, education, and publication of the 'Working Women' (KWWAU 2004).

⁶⁸ In the manufacturing sector the office workers were often compelled to protect their workplaces physically from production workers' violent activities so that there existed great hostility between these two worker groups.

⁶⁹ It is impossible to define Korea's middle class because it is not a homogeneous group. Korean people tend to divide it into two classes, middle and upper-middle class on the basis of a standard of living, lifestyle, and occupation. According to the Korean Development Institute (KDI), there are four criteria to define the middle class (or *jungsancheung*): 'having the subjective feeling of middle class; having an income up to three times higher than the average urban household income; having an education past the middle-class level; having a job among the self-employed, being an employer, or being a salaried worker' (Lett 1998:4-5).

⁷⁰ To some extent, there is more pressure for men than women to maintain their traditional gender identity and roles in the Korean society. Korean manhood, characterised as both physically and mentally stronger, more responsible, and more cohesive to collective activities, are usually reinforced by family, school, military, media, and the workplaces. Men's strong rigidity in terms of the dichotomised gender roles and masculinist identity often conflicts with women who have more flexible ideas of their gender identity (Oh Han 1999:113-20).

⁷¹ In response to the requests by the Ministry of Gender Equality, women's and other civil groups, the current Roh Moo-Hyun government intended to abolish *Hojuje* by the end of the year 2003. However, it has not been abolished up to the present (October 2004). The issue has aroused a great deal of controversy, with many opposed to the system's demise, particularly those affiliated with Confucianist groups (*Joseon*, May 05 2003).

⁷² Another problem of this system is that the order of succession is determined regardless of a male's age or contribution to a family. The order of succession is represented as son, daughter, wife, mother and daughter-in-law. For instance, a three-year-old son becomes a family head even though there are a mother and a grandmother who can lead the family better than the young boy. This system makes people think that a son who will succeed to a family head is more important than a daughter. One of the significant side effects of this system appears as a son preference in families. That is, bearing a son remains a big responsibility of married women. As a result, abortion is tacitly accepted in the Korean society when it is a female foetus, causing an asymmetric gender ratio of the young population, more boys compared to girls.

⁷³ Affected by marriage, child bearing and rearing in women's lifecycle, Korean women's workforce participation pattern by age is presented as an M-shaped curve. This M-shaped pattern of Korean women's workforce participation is rather unique compared to other countries. Many countries, including the United States, Australia, France, and Germany, show the inverse U pattern, referring to the fact that a majority of the female workforce enter the labour market after their education and remain in employment until their retirement. Japanese women are said to have a very similar workforce participation pattern to Korea (Kim, O. A. 2000).

⁷⁴ Parents' bias toward education for their daughters and sons has been seen to decline over the years. For instance, in the 1993 survey, 22.4 per cent of women claimed their parent's bias as the reason for their unsatisfactory education level, compared to 2.7 per cent of men. However, in the 2000 survey, these figures dropped to 17.7 per cent of female and 2.3 per cent of male respondents (NSO 2001).

⁷⁵ There is another Chinese phrase that is often used by Korean people to stress the difference between men and women. It is *namnyeochilse budongseok*, literally

meaning that boys and girls must be separately located once they reach the age of seven.

⁷⁶ The textbooks tend to describe financial reasons as the most important for women's paid work participation, and also treat the increase in women's workforce participation as connected to the rises in some social problems, including the weakening of family roles and the increase in divorce rates (Chung and Kim 2002).

⁷⁷ The ratio of over 2-year collage graduates between Korean men and women in 2000 was 48.3 and 51.7 per cent (MOE 2002). According to the OECD data (2003), the ratio of Korea's over 2-year college graduates to total population at typical age of graduation (multiplied by 100) in public and private institutions in 2000 was 37 per cent and women's only ratio was 38. These were higher than the OECD member country means, 15 and 15 per cent respectively.

⁷⁸ The modern type of the female sex industry in Korea emerged during the Japanese colonial period. The colonial power created the red light districts with legal prostitution in some big cities, such as Seoul and Pusan, as a way to promote Japanese migration to Korea (*Segyeilbo* 04 April 2004). During the period of the Korean War (1950-53) the US first established its military camps all around Korea. In the society where sexual chastity of women and ethnic homogeneity were valued as the most important virtues in tradition, women who were engaged to the US military sex-related industry were despised ruthlessly and treated as despicable citizens. Widows and raped women during the War accounted for a majority of the sex workers in the 1950s. They began to be called an ironic nickname, *yanggongju*, (literally meaning 'Western Princess' but used as a metaphor for Yankee whore, and Yankee wife) and they took the lowest position within the hierarchy of prostitution. Treated as 'dirtied' 'shameful' beings of the society, the main goal of many of these *yanggonjus* was to marry American soldiers and escape from their reality in Korea (Kim 1998:175-202; Moon 1998:141-74). The female sex industry has grown larger-scale since the 1960s in association with the state's tourism promotion strategy. During this time prostitution with foreign men appeared as an important part of the country's 'dollar earning activities', which was an open secret in the society. Thus, the prostitution emerged as a popular profit-seeking business around the military camps and big industrial cities. With the state's little legal control on the prostitution business, the brothels and pimps could create big black prostitution markets and this was largely possible in collusion with the law enforcement authorities.

⁷⁹ The studies on sexuality in Korea were conducted very carefully by only a small number of scholars before the late 1980s despite the importance of the sexuality-related research. Pil-Wha Chang Yoon presented three major reasons for this (1999:51). Firstly, talking about sexuality in the public sphere was regarded as a taboo and sexuality-related issues were not welcome in academic discussions in Korean society. Particularly, in the past, male bias was more dominant in the academic arena so that the studies on informal (or private) issues like sexuality were not considered important compared to those on formal issues, such as politics, economics, and education. Secondly, linked to the first reason, scholars hesitated to do a research on sexuality because they were afraid of the reality that tended to see sexuality not as an appropriate academic research subject but as a gossip story in the entertainment section in newspapers. The third reason is related to the problem derived from inside Women's Studies, which had a tendency to give priority to the study of labour and production, not sexuality and reproduction. This tendency

grew in line with the dominant academic tendency of social science, progressivism, in Korea in the 1970s.

⁸⁰ This extra point system for men with military service experience in the public sector job competition was dealt with at a court as a legal case against equal opportunity in employment in 1998. The decision of the court was made in 1999 in favour of the view that the system violated gender equality in employment. However, this case still remains as a controversial issue in contemporary Korean society because of prevailing public opinion, mostly presented by men, against the court's decision (Korean National Council of Women 2003).

⁸¹ It was reported that the Ministry of Labour searched for gender-discriminated job advertisements published in the Korean newspapers and the internet websites during one year, 2002 and found 898 cases. Among them an absolute exclusion of women accounted for 62 per cent. 19.9 per cent of them were related to hiring both men and women but with an unequal number between them, more men than women. 1.9 per cent of them consisted of the case of putting restrictions on women in terms of age and marital status. Finally, 14.9 per cent of them were hiring only women for certain jobs, such as bookkeeping, unskilled manufacturing, and unskilled clerical ones (*Yeonhap News*, 3 September 2003).

⁸² The Ministry of Gender Equality was first established in January 2001 under Kim Dae-Jung's government. The major duty of MOGE is to strengthen the well-coordinated management of women in Korea. Its four bureaus are Office of Planning and Policy Governance, Gender Equality Promotion, Women's Right Promotion, and Cooperation and Liaison (MOGE 2004).

⁸³ This survey was presented in the discussion, 'Gender-differentiated labour market: seeking the alternative', organised by Womenlink and MOGE.

⁸⁴ In his study, '*Wage discrimination in Korea: measurement and distribution*', Kim (2003) examined gender gap in wage and wage discrimination in Korea by using data set for 1993-1999 from the NSO's Survey Report on Wage Structure. The finding of his study suggests different patterns of a decrease in gender wage gap before and after the crisis. From 1993 to 1996, wage discrimination was found to decrease over a wide range of wage distribution but from 1996 to 1999, the decrease continued only among the group of high-paid women. Little or no improvement was made for the middle- and low-paid women during the time period.

⁸⁵ The reasons for differences between men and women in schooling, work experiences and personal and employers' experiences can be caused by discrimination.

⁸⁶ One critical concern of the gold collection campaign lies in the view that it was a political tactic to impose the economic burden on the people. It has been seen that the state did make little effort to investigate the government members who were responsible for the crisis but focused on stimulating people's patriotic sentiments in pursuit of an increase in the country's foreign reserve through such nationalistic campaigns (Lee 1998).

⁸⁷ The educational institutions played a critical role in stimulating people to practise the same patterns of patriotic behaviour. For instance, primary and secondary schools told their students to bring evidence proving their families' participation in the gold collection campaign. In addition, some of those schools prohibited students from using foreign imported products, including their

stationery, and as a result, many students had to purchase new domestic products to replace their old foreign stationery (*Joseon Ibo*, 5 February 1998a). The 'Anti-Titanic' movement which prevailed during the early crisis-affected period is another example showing the Korean patriots' exclusive tendency against foreign products. The movement started from someone's article on the internet saying that if Koreans watched the US-made worldwide popular movie, *Titanic*, they would lose most of the foreign dollars made by the gold trade. This was also reported in the local newspapers and television news and the anti-Titanic movement was spread nationwide quickly. This patriotism-oriented consumerism conflicted with other prevailing social values, including liberalism and globalisation to a considerable extent (*Kookmin Ilbo*, 27 February 1998).

⁸⁸ This news article reported the nationwide campaign for 'getting husbands high-spirited' and introduced the Five Commandments to wives. They are, 1) 'Let your husband rest during holidays: Do not use him as a holiday driver. Take public transports if he wants to rest at home.:' 2)'Share the crisis awareness with your husband: Remember that your husband can be unemployed': 3) 'Lessen your material desire: Reduce your desire for clothes, jewellery, and travelling. The level of your husband's spirit will fall down as much as that of your material desire.: 4) Treat your husband like a king: The people your husband meet outside home are the same as enemies. The family members are the only ones that can treat him preciousy.: and 5) 'Buy him books: Your husband does not dare to buy books informing him of things like what to do when you are unemployed because he is afraid that you may have a fear for the future. Therefore, select useful books on your own and present them to him.'

⁸⁹ FKTU conducted a survey in 1995 investigating how much of their income its married unionists, including both male and female, spend on their family living costs (Cho 1999:9). Family living costs include all amounts of money, spent on family members, including living expenses and pocket money, but not including money spent for stock market investment. The findings of the survey suggested that 28.0 and 26.5 per cent of respective female and male respondents were spending 40-60 percentage of their income on their family living costs. Moreover, approximately 38.0 and 48.0 per cent of each female and male respondents spent 60-100 per cent of their income on their family living costs.

⁹⁰ A large number of married women were also making a monetary contribution for the family but the importance of their income was considered minor to their husband's. Most of their jobs were part-time or home based informal work due to their family commitments, and also to the greater availability of those jobs in the market. As a result, the amount of their income was usually far smaller than that of their male household head.

⁹¹ According to one study on middle class families and economic crisis, newly unemployed men who had more flexible gender expectations coped better with the crisis. Plus, they were less likely to get depressed and drinking heavily, compared to men with less gender flexibility (Chang 1999).

⁹² According the NSO (2003), the importance of married women with employed or unemployed husbands among the total female workforce unprecedentedly expanded in 1998. That is to say, married women accounted for 53.9 per cent of the total female workforce in 1997 and their importance rose to 57.2 per cent in 1998. In addition, looking at the female unemployed workers who used to be non-economic workforce in paid work but began a job-seeking activity after the crisis, a majority of them were married and aged between 30 and 54 with a high school degree.

These people were regarded as accounting for an additional workforce who entered the paid job market due to the decline in their family income (Kim and Moon 1999:83).

5. Gender-differentiated employment changes in post 1997 Korea

5.1 Introduction

The two major objectives of this chapter are to examine in what ways gender relations in Korean society affected the post 1997 labour market transformation and how women's employment experiences were different from those of men. The previous chapter demonstrated the persistent prevalence of patriarchal relations in Korean society, constituting gender hierarchy and division of labour within not only household but also paid work. The central argument of this chapter is that Korea's neo-liberal labour adjustment, focusing on flexible dismissal of redundant regular workforce and of hiring substitute workers, was carried out based on patriarchal gender biases. The discussion of this chapter is based on the comparative analysis of the aggregate employment data showing gender differences in employment changes which occurred during the crisis-affected period, particularly 1998 and 1999. The data analysis shows the gendered process of employment transformation in terms of workforce participation, women's share of employment, and employment segregation during the reference period. The findings of this chapter provide a useful basis for the discussion of the next chapter covering three case studies that present how individual workers experienced the gendered pattern of employment transformation in their workplace and how they perceived gender differentials in employment.

This chapter is composed of two main sections. The first section discusses how the economic difficulties following the 1997 crisis reinforced male dominance over female at the labour market. The focus of the discussion is on the prevalence of employment discrimination against women during the crisis-affected period. The second part of this chapter looks into how women's employment experiences were different from those of men. It focuses on the employment changes that occurred during the crisis-affected period, particularly 1998 and 1999, with examination of how the three theories, predicting the impacts of the economic recession on women's employment, can explain the Korean case. The three theories are women as a reserve army of labour, job segregation, and job substitution, which are discussed in detail in the fourth section of chapter 3. The main purpose in using the three predictions as an analytic framework for the aggregate employment data analysis, is to see which theory has the most explanatory power for the Korean case.

The main evidence to be used in this chapter relies on the descriptive statistics of the nationwide aggregate employment data that enable broad comparisons of employment changes between male and female workers during the reference period, from 1997 to 1999. As discussed in chapter 1, descriptive statistics enables a simplification of wide-ranging numerical data in a sensible way and, therefore, it is useful in showing the changing patterns of a large amount of longitudinal employment data used in this thesis. The primary data sources are the *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey* provided from NSO and the *Wage Structure Basic Statistical Survey* from MOLAB. The two survey data were classified in accordance with the sixth revision of the Korean Standard Industrial

and Occupational Classification announced in 1991. In particular, the 1997 and 1998 data from the 'wage structure basic statistical survey' was collected through a sampling from firms with 10 regular employees or more, but in 1999 the survey expanded to firms with five regular employees or more. The employment data used in this research are men and women's workforce participation rates, unemployment rates, employment rates by industrial and occupational division, and workers' status from 1997 to 1999. Additionally, the changes in wages and working hours are also shown in the research. This quantitative data analysis supports and validates the qualitative analysis used for the case studies in the next chapter.

5.2 Gendered process of employment adjustment in post 1997 Korea

5.2.1 The State-led employment adjustment and critiques

Following the 1997 crisis, Korea's economy as a whole significantly contracted with the consequent shutdown, merger, acquisition, and downsizing of many businesses. As discussed in the third chapter in regard to the relationship between crisis-affected countries and the IMF, the Kim Dae-Jung regime, newly established in February 1998, had no other choice but to pursue fundamental economic and labour reform based upon the IMF's neo-liberal SAPs. Moreover, in order to achieve quick economic recovery, the regime took a radical reform strategy, seen as a 'bitter-pill' prescription or 'radical shock therapy', requesting all the market actors' to share the burden of economic

difficulties by cooperating in the state-led SAPs (Lee, J. S. 2002:15; Park, E. H. 2000:445).

In the process of post crisis economic restructuring, market efficiency took priority over social justice including equity and welfare. In the situation where market-centred economic reform, including downsizing or shutdown of firms, was expected to jeopardise a number of people in both management and labour-sides, the Kim Dae-Jung government considered that people's discontent with the reform could be a critical obstacle to quick economic recovery. Therefore, the President announced the government's political platform as 'democratic market economy' during his presidency, and appealed to all society members, including political partisans, trade unionists, and civil rights activists, to cooperate with the state-led economic reform to save the whole country. Therefore, the regime tried to get all society members to participate in reform, and the first attempt was the creation of the Tripartite Commission, particularly with the aim of gaining a national consensus on some economic and social issues. These issues included structural reform of the conglomerates, closing of non-competitive firms, and legalisation on lay-offs (Song 1999; Yoo 2001).

The introduction of the new labour legislation had a great impact on the labour market by facilitating firms' lay-offs and replacement of full-time permanent with a flexible form of workers, such as temporary contract-based, part-time or outsourced. In addition, two forms of substantial wage moderation were agreed upon, either a wage reduction or a wage freeze. In 1998 the average wage per employee fell by 2.5 percent, equivalent to a cut by almost 10 percent

in terms of real wage, as the inflation rate soared to 7.5 percent (OECD 2000).

While the lay-off system was commonly used to dismiss redundant workforce, a voluntary retirement system, also called an 'honourable early retirement', was also introduced in firms aiming to reduce possible problems caused by forceful lay-off during the downsizing period (Cho 2000:140). As a result, firms selected a number of people to be removed in accordance with their own lay-off criteria and informed the workers of the fact that they would be forcefully removed if they resisted by remaining at work. Therefore, in order to persuade the workers to leave with little resistance, firms provided an early retirement compensation package, including a larger retirement allowance than the normal amount and an early pension benefit. Therefore, the workers who were told to leave and other workers who feared the future threat to their job stability decided to withdraw themselves with such a compensation package (Kim, J. G. 1999; Kwun 2001).

Nevertheless, labour market reform in Korea is often criticised based on three significant grounds. First, in the course of restructuring there was little effort made to encourage resource redistribution through a democratic process (Song 1999; Yoo 2001). Indeed, the presence of a tripartite committee suggests that the reform was implemented on the basis of a democratic mechanism. The tripartite agreements on structural reform, including the labour and management relationship, labour laws, and economic policies, accounted for the first Social Compact since the crisis, and contributed to calming unrest and reducing social costs to a great extent (Lee, J. S. 2002:106-7; Song 1999). However, it has been argued

that the committee achieved the limited success in the sense that it was not a democratic and effective channel of communication for all of the party participants. Both domestic and international expectation of the nation's quick economic recovery placed huge pressure on each party in the process of negotiations and thus it was not possible for each of them to put their major concerns and interests into the negotiations on an equal basis.

As a result, the government and management had a relatively stronger representation in the negotiations, while the labour side had hardly any choice but to accept the extensive of labour market reform, including lay-offs and reduction in wages (Lee, J. S. 2002:101)⁹³. Thus, all parties agreed to the introduction of legislature allowing promotion of flexibility in the labour market, including lay-offs and workers' dispatch system, to the extent that all would strive to minimise those outcomes and eliminate unfair labour practices (Song 1999). However, the consensus did not last long because the government had to accept the employers' strong request to permit them to carry out massive lay-offs for managerial reasons. Facing massive job destruction and unemployment without any solid agreement on employment protection, each party in the tripartite committee lost trust in one another. Consequently, the Commission rarely prohibited unfair employment practices against marginalised workers including females and non-regular workers in the post crisis adjustment period (Kang 1999; Kim 2003a).

Secondly, the labour market reform has only focused on an increase in labour market efficiency largely through reduction in labour costs by downsizing the workforce or by enhancing labour flexibility in terms of numerical, wage and working hours. One study (Kim 2003b;

2004b) suggests that the Korean labour market has had the highest degree of numerical flexibility in the world after 1997, even exceeding that of the United States, in terms of labour market, employment, and wages⁹⁴. This outcome demonstrates great changes in the Korean labour market conditions between pre- and post 1997 crisis period. During the pre crisis period the United States showed a higher degree of flexibility in most categories. Moreover, deregulation and increases in numerical flexibility in the Korean labour market has been implemented on the basis of little employment protection hindering abuse of lay-offs and labour substitution and ensuring an equal treatment between workers who do equivalent jobs regardless of their job status (Chung 2003). Consequently, facilitation of lay-offs, wage reduction, replacement of full-time permanent by casual workforce in the labour market with little employment protection has worsened the extent of dual labour division between primary and secondary, resulting in vertical polarisation of individuals between the haves and the have-nots⁹⁵.

The third important problem to be addressed is the pervasiveness of unfair gender-differentiated employment arrangements in the process of employment restructuring, furthering marginalisation of women in employment. The flexibility-driven employment adjustment was carried out, without consideration for equal employment policies and legal actions to prevent discriminatory employment practices against a marginal form of labour, specifically women. This issue is directly related to the central theme of this thesis, the gender dimension of employment adjustment in post 1997 Korea.

5.2.2 Gender dimension of employment adjustment

Given that massive job cuts were inevitable as a result of economic contraction and the SAPs-based employment adjustment after 1997, firms' discriminatory employment practices against women were largely taken for granted at both the institutional and individual levels. For instance, Korean Womenlink (*yeoseongminuhoe*), one of the nationwide women-only organisations, conducted a survey in 1999 to investigate the gender impacts of unemployment based on female workers' own experiences at their previous workplace. The number of the respondents was 384 female workers who became unemployed in post 1997⁹⁶. To the question asking whether or not there were gender-discriminated practices against women in the process of their unemployment, 28.9 per cent of the total respondents answered positively. In addition, 67.4 per cent of them said that the already-existing gender differentials in their previous workplace had an impact on their unemployment.

In the historical context, employment discrimination against women was on the decline after the first introduction of the Equal Employment Act (EEA) in 1988⁹⁷. For instance, forced dismissal of female workers for the reasons of marriage and pregnancy seemed to disappear steadily after the enforcement of the legislation, but was revived after the crisis (Kang and Shin 2001:122; Womenlink 2001). In addition, during the post crisis period, in some workplaces women were the first to be discharged from their work if they were in a dual income family or were located in women-dominated occupations in a workplace⁹⁸. Some firms used certain lay-off criteria giving married women priority in unemployment because they were thought to have better economic stability in their household⁹⁹. Especially,

women with a husband working in the same firm were forced to resign their jobs. These firms announced the policy by saying 'only one family member in the workplace' without making any remarks as to who was to leave the job. In some cases, employers threatened married women that their husband would be suspended from their work unless they resigned voluntarily¹⁰⁰ (Shin 2002:49-50). Whether or not wives were explicitly pushed to resign, they accounted for the majority of people dismissed by the policy.

Moreover, massive dismissals of women in female-dominated occupations in firms were mainly achieved by the removal of particular full-time permanent occupations and the creation of the same occupations but with more flexible forms of employment conditions, including short-term fixed, part-time, and outsourced. This pattern of gender-differentiated labour change was justified as the firms' business strategy in pursuit of lean and efficient labour management. In the process of employment adjustment, some firms transformed workers' employment status strategically from full-time permanent to more flexible forms of employment. Those in less-important or less-responsible occupations became the major targets and women were over-represented in those jobs. For instance, 23.1 per cent of the total female workforce was employed on a full-time permanent basis in 1997 but it declined to as low as 20.4 in 1998 and continued to fall to as low as 18.7 per cent in 1999 (NSO 2000).

5.2.3 Summary

In sum, this first section has demonstrated that the Korean labour market has undergone significant employment changes since the 1997 crisis. Enhancement of employment and wage flexibility within

the legal boundary is regarded as the primary policy implemented in the labour market. As a result, dismissals of redundant workforce through lay-offs and increases in contingent types of employment became the norm, as well as declines and rises in wage adjustment. Despite the first tripartite agreement to minimise lay-offs and protect workers' employment, there had been massive job destruction and unemployment in the course of restructuring. To make matters worse, new labour laws allowing lay-offs in workplaces were enforced without strict employment protection laws. Thus, workers often suffered from threats of misuse or abuse of lay-offs by employers. Moreover, increases in contingent types of employment appeared to widen the income gaps between different groups of workers, such as between primary and secondary, between full-time permanent and casual workers. Therefore, the Korean labour market has embraced three major problems, including a persistent threat of unemployment and job instability and an expansion in non-regular workers causing a worsening of unequal income distribution (Lee, J. S. 2002:226; OECD 2000). More importantly, the hardships of the recession and employment adjustment with a focus on flexible dismissal of regular workforce and of hiring substitute workers were unequally distributed on the basis of gender bias. The crisis reinforced social patriarchy, that is male dominance over women at the social level, through exclusion and marginalisation of women from jobs, especially jobs offering regular employment conditions. The following section examines how women's employment experiences were different from those of men based on the analysis of the nationwide aggregate employment data.

5.3 The data analysis of the aggregate employment data

In this section, the comparative analysis of men and women's employment changes during the two years of 1998 and 1999 is presented in association with the three theories, women as a reserve army of labour, job substitution and job segregation. The theory of women as a reserve army of labour sees a positive relationship between women's paid work participation and the booms and slumps of the economic conditions. Therefore, this theory predicts declines in women's workforce participation and their relative share of employment during economic downturn and, at the same time, a rise in the degree of occupational segregation by gender. On the contrary, job substitution theory predicts that women have greater opportunity to participate in the paid workforce during economic recessions because of their lower labour values. Employers, who are pressed to cut costs and increase the flexibility of production, substitute women for men within their workforces. This theory proposes the opposite prediction to the women as a reserve army of labour theory. According to job segregation theory, the changes in economic conditions have greater impact on men's rather than women's employment because women are employed in feminised jobs, including teaching and nursing, that contract less severely than do the jobs which men hold during an economic recession. Hence, this theory predicts that women generally stay stable in employment in recessions but men confront the problems of unemployment and less employment stability.

The predictions of the three theories on women's employment changes in recessions are summarised in Table 5.1 (Humphries 1988:16).

Table 5.1 Predictions of the three theories on women's employment in recession

Predictions regarding behaviour of variable during downswing	Women as a reserve army of labour	Job segregation	Substitution
Women's workforce participation rate	Fall	No prediction	Rise
Women's relative share of employment	Decline	Rise in aggregate	Increase
Employment segregation	Rise	Decline	Fall

5.3.1 Changes in the workforce participation and unemployment rates

In order to examine the Korean case in accordance with the three theories' predictions, this research first looks at the respective changes in Korean economic conditions represented by GDP, workforce participation rates and unemployment rates by gender during 1997, 1998, and 1999. As shown in Table 5.2 during the 1998 recession all industrial activities, including both goods and service-production, shrank to a large extent and, for instance, GDP of the total industry fell by 6.7 compared to 1997. The contracted economy began to recover from 1999, recording 10.9 per cent of the GDP growth compared to 1998 but the GDP gain was still lower than that for 1997.

Table 5.2 Changes in GDP, workforce participation and unemployment rates, 1997-99 (per cent)

	1997	1998	1999
GDP ¹	5.0	-6.7	10.9
Agricultural ^a	4.6	-6.6	5.4
Manufacturing ^b	6.6	-7.4	21.0
Tertiary ^c	5.1	-4.0	3.6

¹ The GDP of 1997 was 476.6 million US dollars. It changed to 317.7 and 405.8 million dollars in 1998 and 1999 respectively.

^a Agricultural industry: agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing

^b Manufacturing industry: mining and manufacturing

^c Tertiary industry (also called social overhead capital and other service): constructions, wholesale & retail trade, restaurant & hotels, electricity, transport, storage & communication, business, personal, public service & others

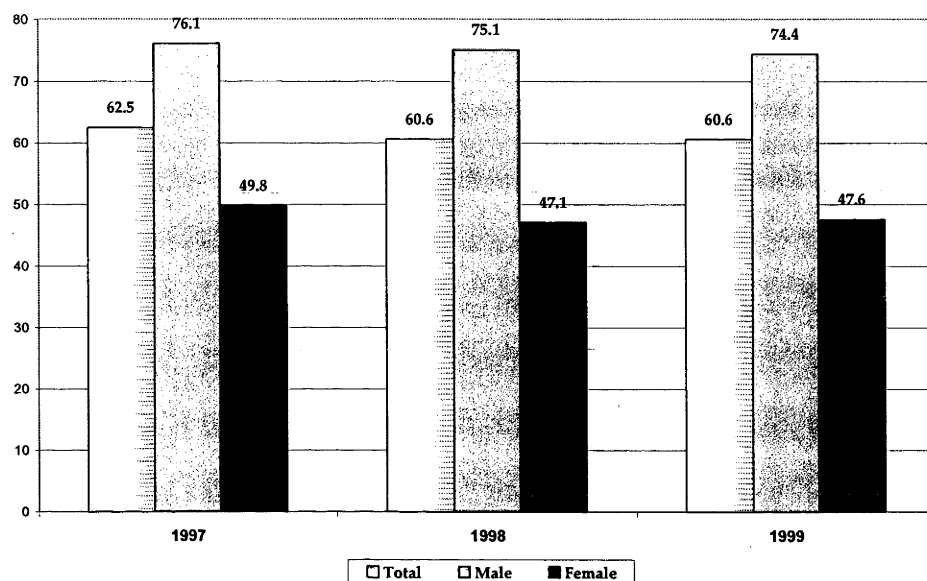
Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

The importance of Korean women's work in the labour market has steadily increased over the last four decades. 37 per cent of women over the age 15 participated in the workforce in 1966 and it changed to 42.8 in 1980 and 49.8 per cent in 1997, the peak before the crisis. On the other hand, men's workforce participation rate has slightly declined from 78.9 per cent in 1963 to 76.4 and 76.1 per cent in 1980 and 1997 respectively¹⁰¹. The continuous growth of the women's workforce participation rate suddenly stopped as a result of the 1997 crisis. However, it is important to note that the changing pattern of men and women's workforce participation rates appeared differently during the economic restructuring period of 1998 and 1999.

As represented in Figure 5.1, during the year of 1998, as many as 329,000 women (equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the 1997 female workforce) left the workforce; this was greater than the 121,000 men (or 0.4 per cent of the 1997 male workforce) who left. On the other hand, during the 1999 economic recovery period, women's workforce participation increased by 0.5 per cent of the 1998 female workforce whereas men's workforce participation declined more

significantly in 1999 compared to that for 1998¹⁰². Compared to that for 1997, the reduced size of the male workforce population was 1.7 per cent, which was smaller than the 2.2 per cent for women during the same period.

Figure 5.1 Changes in workforce participation rate, 1997-99 (per cent)

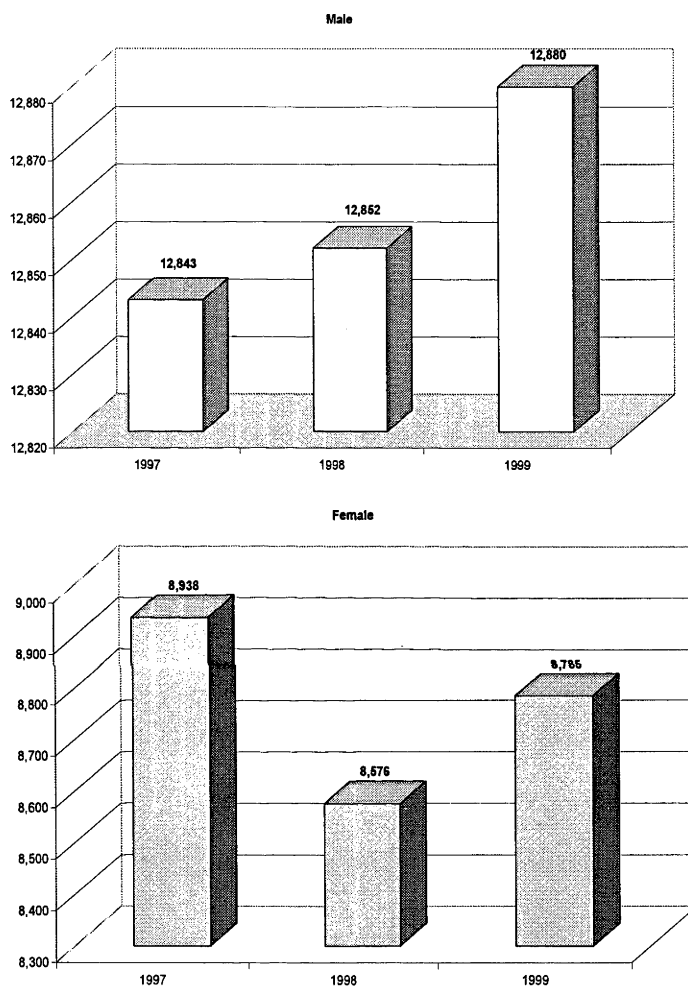


Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

Figure 5.2 shows the number of male and female workforce from 1997 to 1999. The greater decline in Korean women's workforce participation rate during the 1998 recession and the increase in their workforce participation rate during the 1999 recovery period support the prediction of the flexible reserve army theory. The reason for the greater reduction in women's workforce participation is seen that women, who found greater difficulty in finding a new job, compared to men, gave up the job seeking activity and, finally, removed themselves from the workforce (Chang 1999; Kim, T. H. 2000:44; Shin 2001). Kim and Moon (1999) examined the transition behaviour of unemployed people from June to December in 1998 based on the data offered by NSO¹⁰³. Among those who were unemployed in June,

54.3 per cent of men and 47.2 of women were employed in December. This shows the lower re-employment rate for women in the recession.

Figure 5.2 Changes in the number of male and female workforce, 1997-99 (1,000 persons)



Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

Moreover, after six months of the unemployed period, approximately 40 per cent of women switched to the discouraged unemployed, who gave up job seeking activity, and the number of women in this group was higher than men by 29.2 per cent¹⁰⁴. These discouraged unemployed do not engage in any job-seeking activity, staying completely outside the labour market, and thereby are not

included in the official unemployment data. As represented in Table 5.3, this is one of the major reasons for the lower official unemployment rate for women (5.6 per cent) than that for men (7.1 per cent) in 1998, despite the greater decline in women's employment rate compared to men in the same year.

Table 5.3 Changes in unemployment rates, 1997-99 (per cent)

Total	2.6	6.8	6.3
Male	2.8	7.6	7.1
Female	2.3	5.6	5.1

Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

Another significant reason may be related to the fact that a large number of female workers are participating in the informal sector jobs, such as home-based manufacturing and self-employed service jobs (such as street vendors and small family-style restaurant or shop owners), which usually offer a lower wage level compared to that of the formal sector jobs. During the crisis-affected period, the importance of such jobs for women increased because those who had difficulties in finding a job in the formal sector entered the informal sector due to easier access to it. In addition, women are over-represented in the sector (KWWAU 2004). As a result, women's participation in the informal sector jobs possibly lowered the real unemployment rate for women¹⁰⁵.

5.3.2 Changes in employment by industrial division

In the contemporary Korean economy, the importance of the tertiary industry is foremost, compared to the primary and secondary sectors. In terms of the workforce distribution by industrial division, for

instance, in the year of 1997, 67.3 per cent of the total workforce were employed in the tertiary sector, while 11.3 and 21.4 per cent were located in agricultural and manufacturing sectors, respectively. Considering that the ways workers and employers respond to recessionary conditions and SAPs can vary with their industrial circumstances, this study finds it useful to examine changes in men and women's job gains and losses in terms of industrial division. Table 5.4 shows the percentage changes in male and female workforce from 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 respectively. In the table, the industries are grouped into two categories by a gender concentration shown as male-dominated and female dominated. The purpose of this division is to see whether the industries with different gender intensity experienced similar or dissimilar employment change during the crisis-affected period. The extent of the gender intensity was measured by the ratio of female to male workers in each individual industry. If the female to male ratio of an industry is greater than that of the total industry, the industry is considered as a female-dominated industry. Amongst 23 manufacturing industries in accordance with the sixth revision of the Korean Standard Industrial Classification, only six industries, three female and three male dominated, are presented in Table 5.4 for comparison. The three industries that showed the top female concentration in 1997 were selected as female-dominated industries, while the other three with the least female concentration were chosen as male-dominated industries. The tertiary sector is composed of 13 individual industries and all of them are shown in the table.

Table 5.4 Comparison of changes in men and women's job gains and losses by industrial division, 1997-98 and 1998-99 (1,000 persons and per cent)

	97-98		98-99	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	-5.09	-7.34	0.90	3.05
Agricultural	5.97	3.68	-1.69	-6.33
Manufacturing	-12.18	-16.37	0.43	7.37
Tertiary	-2.88	-6.42	1.38	3.62
Female-dominated industries				
Manufacture of Textiles	-12.05	-18.36	24.09	26.95
Manufacture of Apparel	-23.51	-22.54	10.44	21.91
Manufacture of Electronic Components ^a	-7.74	-13.88	-2.34	-6.41
Wholesale and retail trade	-1.69	-5.82	1.21	4.50
Hotels and restaurants	-5.68	-9.63	4.42	3.63
Financial institutions and insurance	9.37	-8.65	-1.38	-7.77
Education service	3.89	2.60	-4.99	1.19
Health & social welfare	7.69	10.87	7.14	6.67
Other public society, personal service	-2.12	-11.53	3.90	5.69
House-keeping service	-37.50	-11.11	-0.20	-0.01
Male-dominated industries				
Manufacture of Motor Vehicles	-16.09	-31.21	-6.61	24.80
Manufacture of Basic Metals	-8.25	-30.49	17.45	30.08
Manufacture of Coke, Refined Petroleum Products and Nuclear Fuel	-10.68	-13.96	-1.46	-2.1
Electricity, gas and water supply	-21.21	-25.00	0.00	0.00
Construction	-20.67	-33.49	-5.85	-14.48
Transport, post and telecommunications	-0.67	-3.79	3.67	-0.79
Real estate and renting and leasing and business activities	1.46	-15.36	10.72	7.08
Public admin, defence, social security	12.33	16.13	6.73	48.33
International & other foreign institution	41.67	0.00	-5.88	-100

a: It also includes Radio, Television and Communication Equipment and Apparatuses

Source: MOLAB, 2003. *Wage Structure Basic Statistical Survey*, Seoul.

As shown in Table 5.4, more women than men lost their jobs in 1998 and gained new jobs in 1999. For instance, compared to 1997, in 1998, 1,276,000 persons lost their jobs in total and this means approximately 6 per cent of the 1997 workforce was discharged during 1998.

In terms of the absolute number of the job decline, 641,000 female workers equivalent to 7.34 per cent of the 1997 female workforce left their jobs and this is larger than 636,000 male workers or 5.09 per cent of the 1997 male workforce¹⁰⁶. On the other hand, in 1999, 353,000 persons or 1.77 per cent of the 1998 total workforce, gained jobs, and they included 107,000 men and 247,000 women (0.90 and 3.05 per cent of each 1998 male and female workforce). Here again, the greater changes in women's employment in total compared to that of men during the recession and recovery period is supportive of the flexible reserve theory.

Looking at the changes in men and women's employment rates by industrial division, women's job loss in 1998 and gain in 1999 was greater than those for men in almost all industries¹⁰⁷. Apparently, during the recession period men and women workers on the whole experienced negative employment changes. However, women workers underwent more sensitive employment changes in most cases, and this is in contrast to the prediction of the job segregation theory. For instance, in the case of the three manufacturing industries with high female concentration, the percentage increase and decrease in women's employment in each industry during the years appeared greater than those for men¹⁰⁸. This is not very different from the changes in the male-dominated manufacturing industries and the entire tertiary industry.

However, the employment rates of some public service industries including the education service¹⁰⁹, health and social welfare, public administration, defence and social security, and international and other foreign institutions, grew in 1998. In general, demand for services in these industries stayed relatively more stable than demand in other businesses during economic downturn periods. As presented in Table 5.4, compared to other industries, women workers in these industries were protected from the abrupt job cuts brought by the economic shock, and so were men. Job segregation theory predicted that public service jobs, particularly those in which women are highly concentrated due to job segregation by gender are less cyclically sensitive than male-concentrated occupations, and thereby female workers in those jobs are better protected from unemployment. Nonetheless, the post 1997 Korean case is not supportive of this prediction of job segregation for the following reasons. First, the ratio of men and women in each of those service industries was fairly even at that time and, consequently, it is difficult to say that the industries were heavily gendered. Second, men, almost equally with women, enjoyed the employment protection derived from lower cyclical sensitivity of the industries.

There are two service industries in which the reduction of the total workforce during the recession period was primarily driven by the job-cuts of female workers. They are the financial and insurance industry and the real estate, renting, and leasing business. In the case of financial and insurance industries, during the span of one year, 1998, while 8.7 per cent of the 1997 female workforce left their job, the percentage of male workers increased by as much as 9.4 per cent of the 1997 male workforce. In 1999, the number of male workers

declined but the decline was far smaller than that for women. After all, approximately 71,000 female workers in this industry were discharged from their workplace during the two years, and this is much greater than the 26,000 male workers.

Table 5.5 Changes in the female to male ratio by industry, 1997-99 (per cent)

	1997	1998	1999
Total	0.699	0.683	0.697
Total manufacturing	0.41	0.39	0.40
Total service	0.72	0.70	0.72
Female-dominated			
Manufacture of Textiles	0.90	0.83	0.85
Manufacture of Apparel	2.12	2.15	2.37
Manufacture of Electronic Components	0.73	0.68	0.65
Wholesale and retail trade	0.81	0.77	0.80
Hotels and restaurants	2.19	2.09	2.08
Financial institutions and insurance	1.36	1.14	1.06
Education	1.42	1.40	1.49
Health and social work	2.21	2.28	2.27
Other public society, personal service	1.01	0.91	0.93
House-keeping service	27.00	38.40	47.75
Male-dominated			
Manufacture of Motor Vehicles	0.16	0.13	0.18
Manufacture of Basic Metals	0.11	0.09	0.10
Manufacture of Coke, Refined Petroleum Products and Nuclear Fuel	0.07	0.07	0.07
Tertiary			
Electricity, gas and water supply	0.12	0.10	0.09
Construction	0.81	0.77	0.80
Transport, post and telecommunications	0.13	0.12	0.12
Real estate and renting and leasing and business activities	0.51	0.43	0.41
Public admin, defence, social security	0.31	0.32	0.44
International & other foreign institution	0.083	0.059	0.000

Source: MOLAB, 2003. *Wage Structure Basic Statistical Survey*, Seoul.

In the case of real estate, renting, and leasing business activities, the number of male workers constantly increased while approximately

36,000 female workers were withdrawn from their workplace. The outcomes of the disproportional employment changes in these two industries are more supportive of the theory of women as a reserve army of labour, than of the other two theories.

Table 5.5 shows the changes in the female to male ratio by industry from 1997 to 1999. Similar to Table 5.4, the employment ratio of female to male from 1997 to 1998 declined in all industries, except in the four industries of apparel, health and social work, other public society and personal service, and house-keeping service. Looking at both Table 5.4 and 5.5, in the apparel industry, both men and women's employment declined from 1997 to 1998 but women's employment declined slightly less than that of men, whereas women gained slightly more employment compared to that for men in health and social welfare and, other public society and personal service. In the case of the house-keeping service industry, men's job loss was greater than that for women during the recession year and, as a result, the female intensity in the industry increased. During the recovery period of 1999, women's share of employment increased in many industries compared to that for 1998. However, there are only four industries, including apparel, education, other public society and personal service, and the manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semitrailers, that showed the greater importance of women's employment in 1999 compared to 1997. Nevertheless, the changes in the female to male ratio by the industrial division also support that the destructive employment changes which affected women more than men in all industries, except for some public-related industries. On the other hand, the total eight industries (three in the female-dominated and five in male-dominated industries), including hotel and restaurant, financial and insurance, and real estate industries,

showed a persistent decrease in the importance of women's employment from 1997 to 1999.

Table 5.6 Changes in the share of men and women's employment by industrial division^a, 1997-99 (per cent)

	97	98	99	97-98	97-99
Female-dominated					
(21 industries) Total	40.99	41.23	45.63	0.24	4.64
Male	33.45	33.00	35.83	-0.45	2.38
Female	58.89	63.45	68.31	4.56	9.41
Male-dominated					
(28 industries) Total	59.01	58.77	54.37	-0.24	-4.64
Male	66.55	67.00	64.17	0.45	-2.38
Female	41.11	36.55	31.69	-4.56	-9.41

^a The industrial division is made based upon the Korean Standard Industrial Classification. 49 individual industries, 23 manufacturing and 26 tertiary, are included.

Source: MOLAB, 2003. Wage Structure Basic Statistical Survey, Seoul.

Table 5.6 demonstrates changes in the distribution of male and female workers in the female- and male-dominated industries. These industries are divided by smaller industrial categories compared to those for Table 5.4 and 5.5, and the extent of gender intensity was measured by the ratio of female to male workers in each industry. The numbers of female- and male-dominated jobs are 21 and 28 respectively. During the two years from 1997 to 1999, the number of jobs in the 21 female-dominated industries rose as high as 4.64 per cent, equivalent to the increase of 9.41 per cent of female and 2.38 per cent of male workforce compared to that for the 1997 workforce respectively.

Table 5.5 shows the changes in the female to male ratio by industry from 1997 to 1999. Similar to Table 5.4, the employment ratio of female to male from 1997 to 1998 declined in all industries, except in the four industries of apparel, health and social work, other public society and personal service, and house-keeping service. Looking at

both Table 5.4 and 5.5, in the apparel industry, both men and women's employment declined from 1997 to 1998 but women's employment declined slightly less than that of men, whereas women gained slightly more employment compared to that for men in health and social welfare and, other public society and personal service. In the case of the house-keeping service industry, men's job loss was greater than that for women during the recession year and, as a result, the female intensity in the industry increased. During the recovery period of 1999, women's share of employment increased in many industries compared to that for 1998. However, there are only four industries, including apparel, education, other public society and personal service, and the manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semitrailers, that showed the greater importance of women's employment in 1999 compared to 1997. Nevertheless, the changes in the female to male ratio by the industrial division also support that the destructive employment changes which affected women more than men in all industries, except for some public-related industries. As shown in Table 5.6, the negative employment changes brought by the crisis occurred more severely in the male-dominated industries than in the female-dominated industries. As a result, the importance of the employment in the female-dominated industries relatively was enhanced, resulting in the absorbing of workers from the male-dominated industries, including both men and women. These changes seem to suggest that the job competition in the female-dominated industries increased after the crisis because not only more women but also more men newly entered the industries. Moreover, the employment shifts across industries may suggest that substitution theory, predicting women's substitution in men's jobs, is not relevant to the Korean case because both male and female

workers were more crowded in the female-dominated rather than male-dominated industries.

5.3.3 Employment changes by occupational division

It is also important to look at the employment changes by occupational division during the recession period. Table 5.7 illustrates that among nine occupational categories, the share of women's employment reduced in eight of them from 1997 to 1999 and the exceptional case was made in the craft and related trade occupation. This implies that occupational segregation by gender intensified during the crisis-affected period, although it was to a small extent. Meanwhile, the ratio of women to men in clerical occupations declined the most significantly among the eight categories during the period. Specifically, women accounted for 53.46 per cent of the total workforce in the clerical occupations in 1997 but their employment share in those occupations changed to 47.68 per cent in 1998 and 50.91 per cent in 1999.

Table 5.7 Ratio of women to men by occupational division, 1997-99 (per cent)

	1997	1998	1999
Total	41.16	40.58	41.09
Service workers & shop, market workers	60.93	59.55	60.40
Clerks	53.46	47.68	50.91
Elementary occupations	51.50	51.62	51.23
Agri., forestry, fishing workers	47.96	47.42	46.0
Professionals	34.13	32.94	33.77
Technicians & associated professionals	31.60	32.06	31.02
Craft & related trades worker	22.49	23.40	24.57
Machine operations and assemblers	13.41	13.27	13.23
Legislators, senior officials and managers	4.86	5.26	4.76

Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

In addition, Table 5.7 shows men and women's asymmetric representation in different types of occupations and in hierarchy level. For instance, women made up more than a half of the total workforce in sales, clerical, and elementary occupations, while approximately 5 per cent of the legislators, senior officials and managers were women. According to Kim's study (2000), in 1997, 89.0 per cent of the total female workers were engaged in ten specific female-dominated occupations¹¹⁰ among 27 occupations in total, and this percentage declined slightly to 88.8 per cent in 1999 and mainly as a result of the decline in the number of female workers in employment.

In order to investigate changes in occupational gender segregation, this study estimated the Duncan and Duncan index or index of dissimilarity. Duncan and Duncan index is one of the most frequently used approaches to measure the extent of occupational gender segregation (Keum 2001; Kim, T. H. 2000; Humphrey 1988; Rubery and Tarling 1988). The index is defined as:

$$ID = \frac{1}{2} \sum |F_i/F - M_i/M|$$

where F_i and M_i are the number of female and male employees in workplace i , F and M are the total number of female and male employees respectively.

The index is interpreted as the percentage of the female workforce who would have to change occupations or workplaces so that the occupational distribution of females is the same as the male occupational or workplace distribution. It is a measure from zero to one, where the higher the number, the more segregated the two

groups are (Keum 2001). The indices of 1997, 1998, and 1999 are shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Estimates of gender segregation among the workforce, 1997-99

	1997	1998	1999
Total workforce	0.4489	0.4638	0.4601

Source: MOLAB, 2003. *Wage Structure Basic Statistical Survey*, Seoul.

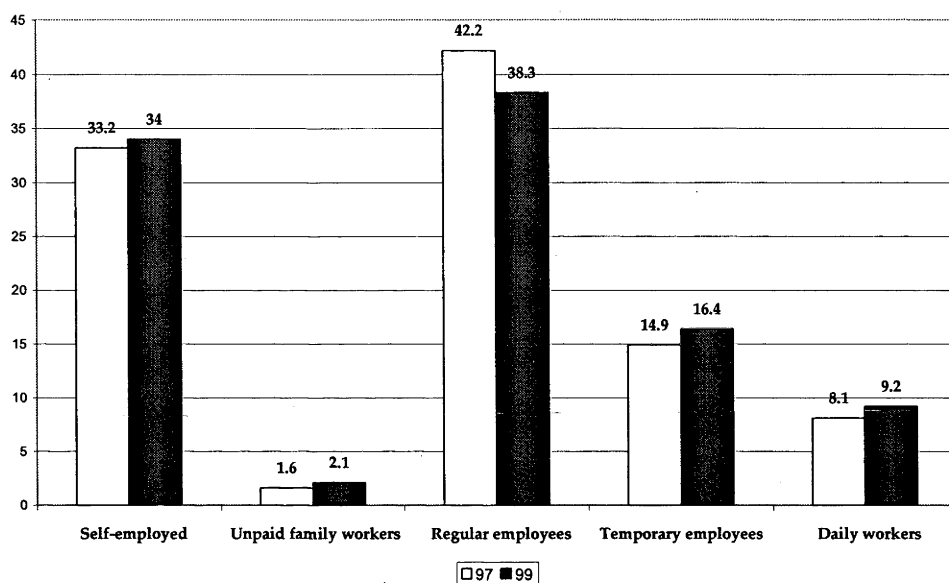
Each index of 1998 and 1999 appeared greater than that for 1997, although the degree of change was small. In particular, the 1998 index was highest among the three years' indices. The greater index implies that occupational segregation by gender worsened in the recession period; this result differs from the predictions of the job segregation and substitution theories. The decrease in the importance of women in almost all occupations appears as a major reason for the increase in occupational segregation by gender. However, it can be assumed that the extent of the changes is not so large because, as represented in Table 5.6, the job gains during the adjustment period were mainly shown in female-dominated industries and not only women but also men who lost their job from male-dominated industries entered the female-dominated industries.

5.3.4 Employment changes in workers' status

One of the most important employment changes that occurred during the crisis-affected period is the rise in non-regular types of employment. Figure 5.4 and 5.5 shows the changes in workers' status from 1997 to 1999. Employment status is largely divided into two worker groups, unpaid (including self-employed and unpaid family workers) and paid (including regular, temporary, and daily workers)

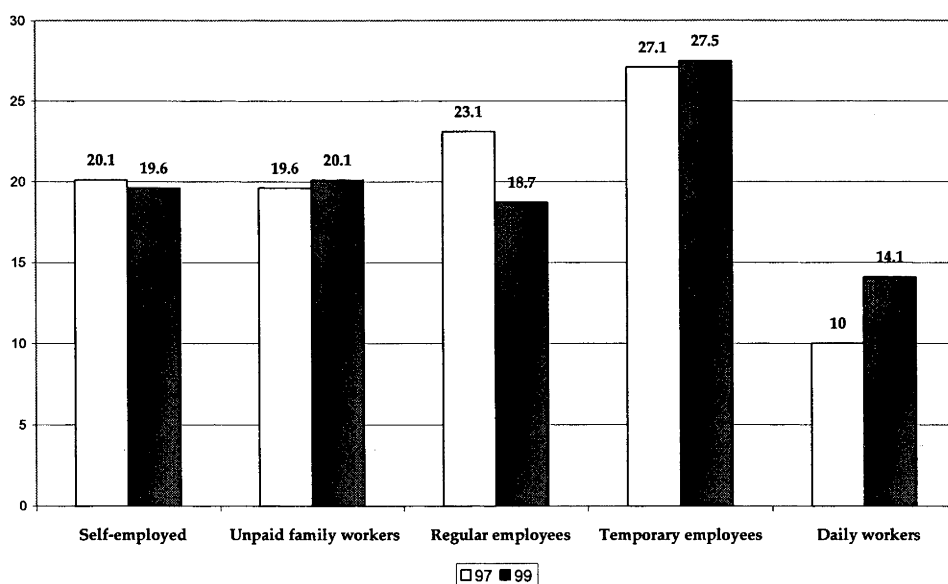
in accordance with the NSO classification. Among unpaid workers, men were over-represented as self-employed, while women were over-represented as unpaid family workers.

Figure 5.4 Changes in distribution of male workers by employment status, 1997-99



Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

Figure 5.5 Changes in distribution of female workers by employment status, 1997-99



Source Source: NSO, 2001. *Annual Report on the Economic Active Population Survey*, Seoul.

Although the percentage is small, the number of self-employed male workers increased as much as 0.7 per cent during the time period, which was the same as the decline in the size of female self-employed. The rise in male self-employment is a result of the increase in the number of men who left their jobs with early retirement compensation and opened their own businesses financed by their retirement payment in the restructuring period. Apparently, the number of both male and female regular workers fell significantly over the two years. Specifically, 3.5 and 4.4 per cent respectively of the 1997 male and female regular workforce disappeared from the labour market. Considering the fact that the number in the temporary and daily workforce increased in each gender group, it can be said that the job cuts were occurred among regular workers and the job gains were largely based on non-regular types of jobs. This resulted in a significant level of decline in the number of women in full-time permanent jobs. In 1999, a mere 18.7 per cent of the total female workers were employed on the basis of the regular employment contracts, and this percentage was far smaller than the 38.3 per cent of the total male workers. This indicates that the representation of the regular female workers among the total female workforce is smaller than in the other three workers' groups, including self-employed (19.6 per cent), unpaid family (20.1 per cent), and temporary (27.5 per cent).

On the other hand, during the recession period there was little increase in wages and annual bonus¹¹¹. Table 5.9 demonstrates changes in monthly wages, annual bonus and working hours from 1997 to 1999. Before the crisis, the annual average wage level was growing constantly at a significant level, recording over 10 per cent

in each year of 1995 and 1996 and 7.8 per cent in 1997 (NSO 2001). It began to grow again from 1999 but the level of annual bonus declined at that time. In terms of gender difference in wages, the gap was reducing as a result of the enactment of the Equal Employment Act, prohibiting wage discrimination against women, and the rise in the minimum wage level (Kim, T. H. 2000; Keum 2002).

Table 5.9 Changes in monthly wages, annual bonus and working hours (per cent, hours)

		Monthly wage	Annual bonus	Working hours	Wage ratio of women to men
Total Industry	1997	7.8	13.2	-0.5	0.625
	1998	1.5	1.1	-0.2	0.631
	1999	5.5	-17.9	2.8	0.638
Manufacturing	1997	8.2	14.7	-0.6	0.583
	1998	-0.3	-1.3	-1.6	0.578
	1999	6.3	-19.6	5.1	0.585

Source: MOLAB, 1998-99, 2000. *Monthly Report of the Labour Statistical Survey*, Seoul.

The growing trend continued even during the two years 1997 to 1999, although to a very small extent. In terms of the total industry, the wage ratio of women to men increased from 0.625 in 1997 to 0.638 in 1999. However, it is notable that in the manufacturing industry, the wage ratio between 1997 and 1998 decreased.

Table 5.10 shows wage difference by employment status in 1999. The level of basic payment for part-time workers reached merely 73.7 per cent of the regular workers, while that for the temporary and dispatched workers was 87.7 and 97.3 per cent, respectively. However, looking at the total amount of monthly payment including annual bonuses and other employment benefits, the differences between regular and non-regular workers appeared far greater. Therefore, employers who were allowed to enhance the employment

flexibility increasingly substituted regular with non-regular workers in the workplaces.

Table 5.10 Wage Differences by Employment Status in 1999 (per cent)

	Part-time	Temporary	Dispatched	Regular
Basic payment	73.7	87.7	97.3	100.0
Bonuses and welfare	9.5	32.5	33.9	100.0
The total amount of monthly payment	49.8	67.1	73.7	100.0

Source: MOLAB, 1998-99, 2000. *Monthly Report of the Labour Statistical Survey*, Seoul.

Adapted from Kim, T. H. 2000. Research Paper on Changes in Korean Women's employment Structure and Future Policy Recommendations, Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI), Seoul.

5.3.5 Summary and conclusion

This section has analysed the aggregate employment data in accordance with the three theories, women as a reserve army of labour, job segregation, and job substitution, predicting the impacts of the economic recession on women's employment. The main findings of the data analysis are that: first; women were more vulnerable to the destructive employment changes brought by the crisis, particularly at the early stage of employment restructuring. This finding is based on the evidence of the greater declines in women's workforce participation and employment in 1998. Second, job competition in the female-dominated industries increased due to the entry of not only more women but also men who were dismissed from the male-dominated industries. A larger proportion of women than men were withdrawn from male-concentrated industries. Moreover, the occupational segregation by gender worsened to some extent during the period because female workers were disproportionately discharged. Third, the job gains for the two years

after 1997 were mostly based on the increase in non-regular forms of employment. Specifically, the job substitution of higher-wage with lower-wage workers commonly occurred during the recession period, particularly regular with non-regular workers. However, the substitution took place mostly among the same gender groups. The details of the discussion are summarised as follows.

Women as a reserve army of labour. The greater decline in women's workforce participation compared to that for men during the 1998 recession period suggested that women were more likely to become discouraged unemployed or inactive workforce by giving up job-seeking activities, since they faced more serious job cuts and more difficulties in finding a new job during the crisis-affected period. The flexible reserve theory predicts that women's unemployment rate would not increase equal to fall in employment because discouraged workers leave the workforce. This prediction is apparently right for the Korean case. That is, the official unemployment rates for women during the two years appeared lower than those for men but women's real unemployment rates were seen to be higher than those for men, if discouraged workers were also counted.

The predictions of the flexible reserve theory are also pertinent to the employment changes by industrial and occupational division. Women's employment losses were greater at the early stage of the crisis-affected period, particularly in 1998, and thus the number of women in the total employment declined more significantly than that for men during the year. On the other hand, more women than men began to gain jobs during the 1999 recovery period but their job gains were not able to make up the job losses made in 1998. There may be two possible reasons for why more women than men were

affected by the destructive employment changes in the recession period (Chang 2001): firstly, it may be because the recession has more negative impacts on the industries where more women are located; secondly, firms' employment policies which are less favourable to women may make it more difficult for women to remain in the workplace in the recession period. What accounts for the Korean case can be discussed in detail on the basis of various empirical inquiries. However, considering the evidence of the greater decline in women's employment in almost all industries in 1998, in this thesis I see the second reason more applicable to the Korean case than the first one. Furthermore, this claim is sustained by the evidence of the pervasiveness of employment discrimination against women during the period, as discussed in the first section of this chapter.

Job segregation. The disproportional employment changes for women appeared in almost all industries regardless of the different gender concentration in each industry. The service industries that are not usually sensitive to the changes in economic conditions expanded the workforce size even during the crisis-affected period. As a result, both male and female workers' employment remained relatively more stable than in other industries and, hence, the prediction of the job segregation theory can be sustained. Yet, considering the fact that those service industries were not absolutely female crowded and, moreover, not only female but also male workers were also protected from unemployment fairly equally in those industries, the prediction of the job segregation theory is regarded as being partially right for the Korean case. On the other hand, there were two service industries showing contradicting employment changes between men and women. In the industries of

finance and insurance, and real estate, renting and leasing business, the share of women in the total employment declined, while that for men grew during the period.

During the reference period, the female-dominated industries led the job creation in most cases and thus absorbed a number of workers, including both men and women, from the male-dominated industries. This also shows the relevance of job segregation theory to the Korean case. Nevertheless, a majority of female workforce located in the female-dominated industries had to confront the intensified job competition with not only women but also men, and female workers in the male-dominated industries were having more difficulties in maintaining their jobs. Moreover, these employment changes in favour of men were seen to intensify the occupational segregation by gender during the period. The ratio of women to men in most occupations reduced, although the reduced extent varied from small to considerable, depending on occupations. The estimates of gender segregation among the total workforce, represented by the index of dissimilarity or Duncan and Duncan index, showed the deepening of the occupational segregation by gender through the adjustment period, which suggests that the prediction of the job segregation and job substitution theories is not entirely relevant to the Korean case.

Job substitution. Nonetheless, the most significant employment change occurred in terms of the shift of the regular to the non-regular workforce on a large scale. The enhancement of employment flexibility and reduction in the wage costs were primarily achieved by the transformation of workers' status from full-time permanent to temporary, short-term fixed, or outsourced. As a result, the

importance of regular workers in the total workforce decreased for both men and women. Within this context, the job substitution of higher-wage with lower-wage workers commonly occurred during the recession period, particularly regular with non-regular workers among the same gender group, but there is no such clear evidence showing that lower-wage female workers replaced higher-wage male workers. Therefore, the prediction of job substitution was partly related to the Korean case, to the extent that women were mostly substituted in the jobs previously performed by women themselves, but under less favourable employment conditions than the previous ones.

The next chapter examines the employment experiences of the three industries, car manufacturing (specifically, the Hyundai Motor Company), commercial banking, and apparel. The case studies are discussed based on the analyses of both quantitative (documentation and questionnaire surveys) and qualitative (individual interviews) data. The central goals for the empirical inquiries are to examine how individual workers experienced the gendered pattern of employment transformation in their workplace and how they perceived gender differentials in employment. The analysis of the mixed data enables more specific interpretation of the employment changes in accordance with the predictions of the three theories. Moreover, the field-work findings are able to explain the factors which account for the gender-differentiated employment changes, if any.

Notes

⁹³ Another criticism of the tripartite committee lies in its weak representation for each party member. The committee consisted of leaders at a national level. Thus, the leaders were not able to represent administrative and organisational bodies at a regional and local level through which employers and workers could collaborate in implementing policies (Song 1999). In the case of the labour-side, two national-level trade unions came to the first tripartite negotiation to represent labourers. They were KCTU and FKTU. However, their co-representation was broken when the first agreements, including the legalisation of lay-offs and dispatching system, were made. With unsatisfying outcomes, KCTU withdrew its representation in the labour-side, criticising the state and employer-led labour market reform. Additionally, KCTU had its own problem inside the organisation in terms of lack of leadership and lack of support from the members.

⁹⁴ In this study (Kim 2003b) the total nine items were examined to compare the degree of flexibility between Korea and the United States during the period of March 1998 to August 2002. The nine items include flexibility in terms of three categories, labour market, employment and wage adjustment, and each specifically measured by three sub-categories, flexibility to meet long-term and short-term equilibrium, and adjustment speed. Labour market flexibility accounted for the estimation of industrial productivity index (the number of the total workforce \times monthly working hours \times hourly wage). Employment flexibility is the estimation of the total workforce population (industrial productivity index $+$ (monthly working hours \times hourly wage)). Finally, wage flexibility is the estimation of the total amount of monthly wage (monthly working hours \times hourly wage = industrial productivity index $+$ the total workforce population). The findings of this study conclude that compared to the United States Korea had the higher degree of flexibility in eight categories except for short-term employment flexibility. This indicates that the Korean labour market had a slimmer labour arrangement, allowing little redundant workforce.

⁹⁵ Especially, decline in wage earnings unavoidably has widened the wage gap among workers and further has increased the number of households in poverty since the crisis. According to NSO's report of the Annual Income and Expenditure per Urban Household (2001), the introduction of flexible wage system and the change in payment from a fixed to an incentive wage system in many workplaces has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. For example, in 1999 the income level of the top-income class went up 3.7 per cent compared to the previous year, while that for the lowest-income class fell by 8.4 per cent during the same time period. Additionally, the percentage of households in poverty, referring to those with income levels lower than the minimum living costs of a year, has risen from 9.7 per cent in 1997 to 12.0 per cent in 2001 (Yoo and Kim 2002). The same study has suggested that changes in employment, including unemployment and underemployment, and income structure since the implementation of the SAPs are the major cause of the widened income gap among workers. However, the government's effort to reduce the income gaps was first made in 2000 through an expansion of social safety nets and of subsidies for households in poverty, which resulted in preventing further dramatic increases in people in poverty.

⁹⁶ The survey was performed in Seoul and *Kyeong-gi* province and the respondents previously worked in the industries of sales distribution, construction, financial and banking, and the media.

⁹⁷ For the details of EEA, see El Rim Kim's report, *The Ten-year Enforcement of Gender Equal Employment Act in Korea: achievement and remaining problems*, published by Korean Women's Development Institute in 1999.

⁹⁸ For the same reason, workers who were close to their retirement due to their age limit were also pushed to resign by taking early honourable retirement. Men accounted for the majority of the early honourable retired because only a few senior women remained in the labour market. These early-retired men got a relatively higher monetary compensation than did most of the female retired who were younger and had to retire receiving a different compensation called the voluntary retirement (Womenlink 2003).

⁹⁹ According to the employment data by marital status (NSO 2003), women's marital status was seen as a significant element affecting women's unemployment. Specifically, the number of the female unemployed with a working husband rose as much as twice for one year, 1998, changing from 126,684 people in January to 240,448 people in December. The number of single unemployed women also increased during the same year but not as much as that for married women.

¹⁰⁰ Korean banks provided the cases showing unfair lay-off practices against married women during the period. The details of the banks' unfair employment practices against women are presented in chapter 6.

¹⁰¹ The decline in the men's workforce participation in the recent decades is largely because of a decrease in the number of young male workers due to the expansion in their higher education, a decline in the retirement age, and a reduction in working days and hours (Kim, T. H. 2000:12).

¹⁰² Women's workforce participation rate continued to grow from 1999 little by little. With the gradual growth afterwards, it finally reached up to the 1997 level in 2002.

¹⁰³ The data is a combination of the Monthly Economically Active Population Survey (1999) and the Annual Household Income and Expenditure Survey (1998).

¹⁰⁴ Kim and Moon also conducted a survey investigating the main reasons for unemployment. 1,000 people who experienced unemployment in 1998 responded to the survey. 60.1 per cent of female and 77.1 per cent of male respondents chose the downsizing or closure of the firms (or particular departments inside firms) because of the economic difficulties as an answer. Importantly, 27.1 per cent of female respondents reported that there were gender-differentiated lay-off criteria in their workplace. Thus they were laid-off 'because they were dual income earners in a household (8.8 per cent)', 'because they were women as a gender (8.1 per cent)', 'because they were working with their husband in the same workplace (6.8 per cent)', and 'because they were not major breadwinners in a household (3.4 per cent)'. On the other hand, only 2.6 per cent of male respondents claimed that female workers in their workplace were discharged because of such gender-differentiated lay-off criteria. This survey outcome shows that gender difference based upon the traditional dichotomy of roles and living spheres, was a part of the important explanations for women's unemployment during the recession period.

¹⁰⁵ Both Christine Sylvester's research on female self-employed workers who were running micro- or small family restaurants (2000) and Seung-Kyung Kim and John Finch's research on housewives' responses to the crisis (2002) demonstrated that some of their interviewees began to participate in the informal sector as a self-employed restaurant owner, tutor, or home-based cleaners after the crisis,

especially in order to make up their husband's income loss due to unemployment or reduction in wages during the recession period.

¹⁰⁶ Looking at the difference between men and women's employment losses at three time points, January, August, and December in 1998, the extent of the difference got smaller over time. Each men and women's employment loss in January was 1.5 and 6.2 per cent, which changed to 5.7 and 8.3 per cent in August, and 4.6 and 6.7 per cent in December, respectively. It is clear that the early burden of the post1997 employment destruction was largely put on female workers. However, as there were not many female redundant workers left in the workplace as a result of the continuous female-oriented dismissal, men came to be more severely affected by employment destruction at the later stage of the employment adjustment (Kim and Moon 1999:16).

¹⁰⁷ The time difference between men and women's employment decline can be explained in accordance with the time period of individual firms' employment restructuring. For instance, most of the large firms (*jaebeols*) and the public sector, which were not instantly nor critically affected by the crisis performed their employment reform actively from mid 1998 and it continued through 1999 and 2000. Men were more crowded in the large firms and, therefore, the job cuts for men occurred more seriously in 1998 rather than 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Only the manufacture of apparel showed the decline in female workers' employment at about one per cent smaller than that for men.

¹⁰⁹ The reduction in male workers in the education service in 1999 was largely derived from the adjustment of the retirement age from the age of 65 to 63 in 1999. As a result, a large number of the senior workers in education, mostly men, had to leave the workforce in 1999. Their jobs were replaced by the new recruits, significantly consisting of women.

¹¹⁰ Ten specific female-dominated occupations included personal service related workers (21.6), skilled commercial agricultural and fishery related workers (12.2), models and sales clerks and sales demonstrators (13.5), vendors and service related elementary workers (9.1), customer service clerks (5.9), machine operators and assemblers (3.2), office related clerks (7.5), other craft and skilled machine operators (6.3), labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport (5.0), teaching associate professionals (4.4).

¹¹¹ Annual bonus refers to extra payment apart from workers' annual income. For example, 90 per cent annual bonus means workers receive an amount equalling 90 per cent of their annual income separately from their wage, on a regular basis but usually not monthly.

6. Case studies: Korean commercial banking industry, apparel industry, Hyundai Motor Company

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is about the three case studies of this thesis, including the industries of commercial banking, apparel and car manufacturing, specifically the Hyundai Motor Company (HMC). The three cases show the prevalence of gender discriminatory employment practices in the workplace, which considerably increased after the crisis. They include forced dismissal of women workers and transformation of many women employees' status from full-time permanent to more flexible arrangements. The analysis of the employment data in the previous chapter has showed that not all industries underwent the same employment changes in post 1997 Korea. As the impacts on women's employment vary across industries and occupations, this study selected three industries with dissimilar industrial and occupational characteristics. The commercial banking industry enables a study of white-collar female workers' experiences, while the study of the apparel industry reveals blue-collar female workers' employment experiences in a female-concentrated manufacturing industry. Finally, unlike the other two cases, the third case focuses on a single workplace, HMC with a predominant male concentration because of the significant impact of HMC's employment adjustment on other industries at that time.

The central goal of these case studies is to show how individual workers experienced the gendered pattern of employment transformation in their workplace and how they perceived gender

differentials in employment. The examination of HMC is largely based on the existing literature and newspaper articles relevant to the case. Meanwhile, the studies of the commercial banking and apparel industries include the analyses of the relevant literature, secondary data, and fieldwork including the questionnaire survey and personal interview data. The first part of the questionnaire survey included some questions looking at general backgrounds of the respondents, such as sex, age, major task in the workplace, employment status, monthly wage level, working hours and so forth. Then, some specific questions followed such as how the employment changes were made in the recession, if they were gender-differentiated and, if yes, what the factors causing gender differences in employment were.

The individual interviews were carried out to investigate people's personal perspectives on their employment experiences after the crisis. Therefore, the interview analysis is the strength of this research as it reveals individual workers' experiences of the gendered pattern of employment transformation in their workplace and their perception of gender differentials in employment. This qualitative part of the research analysis offers the explanations for the two other central questions: how the employment changes occurred along gender lines during the crisis-affected period and what factors account for them. The questions for the survey and interviews were created based upon the existing literature and the preliminary findings of the descriptive statistics based on the secondary data.

The studies of the industries of commercial banking and apparel, and HMC are important because they demonstrate Korea's gender-

differentiated employment changes after 1997 which are seen as a further marginalisation of female workers in the Korean labour market. In particular, all three cases reveal that gender discrimination is important in explaining the decline in the importance of women's employment and the worsening of female workers' employment conditions in each industry during the employment adjustment period. In addition, the empirical findings of this study are related to the major discussion in the previous chapter. The discussion includes: first, many women played a role of reserve army of labour; and women mostly replaced either themselves or other women by accepting far fewer employment benefits and rights than had been offered previously. The second part of this chapter examines the commercial banking sector, followed by the apparel industry. Then, it introduces the case of HMC and moves to the conclusion.

6.2 Commercial banking sector

Commercial banks in Korea have been developed since the 1950s but it was in the early 1980s when they began significant expansion, diversification of products and services, and structural changes in response to the liberalisation and modernisation of financial institutions (Kim, 1999). A large number of both men and women workers entered the banking industry during the period of expansion. In the 1980s the bank jobs became popular among young women, particularly new high-school graduates, as one of a few white-collar occupations offered to women in Korea.

In recent years the number of employees with college or university education has grown considerably as a result of increased levels of women's education and increased job competition. In terms of the employment structure, bank jobs are hierarchically structured depending on the major tasks performed. Bank teller positions are normally on the bottom of the hierarchy and a majority of tellers are female. Korean banks have historically had the gendered structure of employment based on particular employment systems of their own. Until 1993, the banks had a female teller system, called *yeohaengwonjedo*, which distinguished female tellers from male tellers in terms of wage levels and promotion opportunity. Tellers were divided into three categories, senior tellers (level five), beginning tellers (level six), and 'female tellers' (*yeohaengwon*). While newly recruited male workers gained the title of beginning tellers, newly recruited female workers were called 'female tellers', and were paid less and had to take a longer time to become senior tellers than their male counterparts despite the same educational level. To make matters worse, female tellers' promotion was limited to level five, whereas that of male tellers was unlimited to the higher management levels. This barrier to promotion remained in the banks in line with the marriage retirement system, forcing female tellers to resign their jobs before their marriage. Because of its discriminatory employment practices against female tellers, female workers had requested the abolition of the system. Nonetheless, it was in 1990 that the active discussion on the abolition emerged. After many female workers' struggle against the system over years, the Korean banks finally abolished the system from September 1992 (Womenlink 2004).

However, immediately after the abolition of *yeohaengwonjedo*, some of the Korean banks introduced a new human management, called

sininsajedo. This system, borrowed from the Japanese banks, divides the workforce into five groups reflecting the major tasks inside the banks. The five groups include the professional tasks (legal, accounting), the comprehensive tasks (management, research, investment consulting), the engineering tasks (machine, communication-related), the clerical tasks (teller service, book keeping), and the non-regular clerical tasks (on-line teller service, assistant) (Cho 1999). A majority of the bank workforce is engaged in the two task groups, comprehensive and clerical, and the former is privileged over the latter in terms of the importance of work, wages, and promotion. Importantly, most female workers are employed in the clerical position¹¹². The major criterion dividing workers into the two categories is whether or not workers are free to relocate anywhere across the country and even to foreign countries upon request. Only workers with unlimited mobility can choose to work in the comprehensive category.

It has been argued that although this criterion seems gender neutral in theory, it is more difficult for female workers to choose the comprehensive position in practice because of their more limited mobility compared to men (Cho 1999). Because movement between the two positions is almost impossible, most female workers continue to remain in the clerical position, accounting for the banks' stable low-paying secondary workforce. Therefore, *sininsajedo* reinforces the gendered dual employment structure in the banks in an indirect way. From the early 1990s, the importance of tellers' roles was on the wane due to Korean banks' adaptation to the advanced banking system through automation and computerisation of the banking services (Cho 1996; Kim, J. G. 1999). As a result, the banks began to increase the use of the on-line teller service, mostly

performed by part-time or home-based non-regular female workers. This gendered dual employment system and the use of non-regular female tellers were strengthened in post 1997 banks.

6.2.1 Banks in post 1997 period

Blamed as the major cause of the 1997 economic crisis, restructuring of the banking sector became one of the country's priority tasks¹¹³. Its unhealthy business performance was seen to create negative effects for the national economy prior to the crisis. Substantial restructuring occurred in the financial institutions in Korea during the economic downturn and crisis period, primarily through business closure, merger, or downsizing primarily under government-led financial market reform (Crotty and Lee 2001). As a consequence, in 1998 five banks were entirely withdrawn from the market, nine of them merged, and two were waiting to be taken over by foreign investors. In addition, the rest of the banks downsized, largely by reducing the number of their branches nationwide, resulting in as much as a 16.2 per cent decline in branches compared to the previous year of 1997¹¹⁴ (Lee, J. S. 2002:148-9).

Such radical changes to the banks during the post 1997 crisis period were followed by massive unemployment in the workforce. As shown in Table 6.1, the rigorous job-cut oriented downsizing program removed approximately 34 per cent of the bank workforce with regular employment status for the two years from 1998-99 (Lee, J. S. 2002:149; KFFLU 2000). In terms of gender differences, the job decline for women with regular employment conditions was far greater than for men, at 49.1 per cent for women and 27.6 per cent for men during the same time period.

Table 6.1 Changes in the regular workforce in Korean banks¹, 1997-99 (per cent)

	Total	Male	Female	Male ratio	Female ratio
1997	100	100	100	68.7	31.3
1998	75.0	81.8	60.1	74.9	25.1
1999	65.6	72.4	50.9	75.8	24.2
Changes in 1999-97	-34.4	-27.6	-49.1	+7.1	-7.1

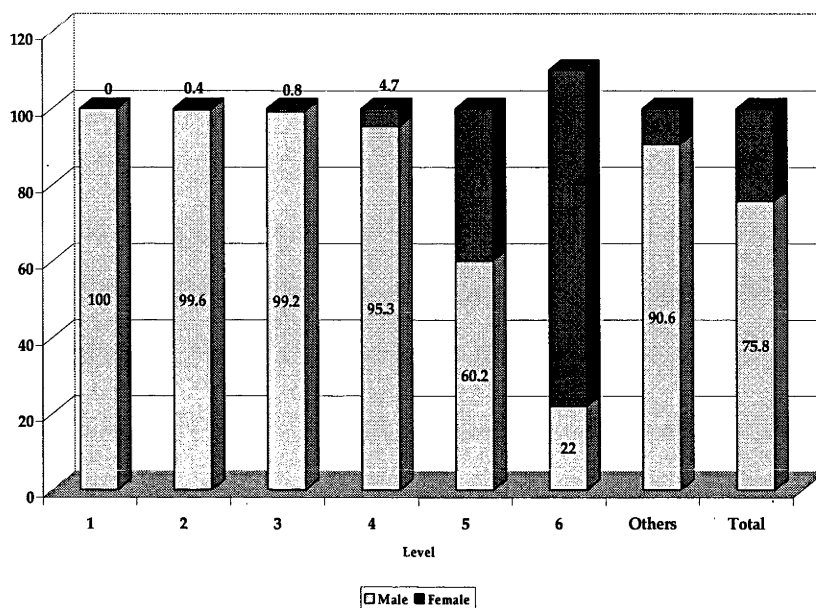
¹The data was collected from 24 nationwide banks.

Source: Korean Federation of Financial Labour Unions (KFFLU), 2000. *The Data for Women's Labour in the Banking Industry, 1997-99*

In addition to downsizing, banks highlighted a new human management strategy, aiming to re-establish professional human resources that were capable of competing in the global financial market. They selected a small number of employees, mostly male workers, to be in charge of major tasks in business, such as dealing with foreign or domestic investors. Meanwhile, minor jobs or assistant tasks, including telling and customer services, were largely taken care of by non-regular workforce, such as part-time, temporary contracted workers, or were outsourced (Kwun 1999; 2001). Women made up the majority of the workforce in those less-prestigious jobs. This new gender division of labour, based on tasks being characterised by the level of importance, during the post crisis period was nothing new in the sense that a hierarchical gender division of labour has always existed in Korean banks. As shown in Figure 6.1, in 1999 few women were represented in the higher levels, including 1, 2, 3, and 4, and a majority of them were found in the lower levels, 5 and 6 (KFFLU 2000). Level 1 is the highest position. A majority of

tellers were located in level 5 and 6, and level 5 had the largest number of the bank workforce.

Figure 6.1 Gender differences in occupational levels, 1999 (per cent)¹



¹The data was collected from 18 nationwide banks.

Source: Korean Federation of Financial Labour Unions (KFFLU), 2000. *The Data for Women's Labour in the Banking Industry, 1997-99*

In regard to how the job cuts were made, Korean banks introduced a voluntary retirement system, also called 'early honourable retirement', aimed at reducing possible problems caused by forceful lay-off during the downsizing period. As a result, banks selected a number of people to be removed in accordance with their own lay-off criteria and informed the workers of the fact that they would be forcefully removed if they tried to remain at work. In order to persuade the workers to leave with little resistance, each bank provided an early retirement compensation package, including more retirement allowance than the normal amount and early pension benefit. Workers who were told to leave and those who felt their

future job stability to be under threat decided to accept the compensation package (Kim, J. G. 1999; Kwun 2001). Consequently, 92.9 per cent of the total unemployed including both male (91 per cent) and female (94.8 per cent) bank workers appeared to leave their jobs voluntarily in the year of 1998.

However, the criteria for lay-off in banks were not gender-neutral. Some of the lay-off criteria of banks were designed to remove the female workforce, specifically married women. For instance, one of the bank's criteria for lay-off selection referred to those who have another family member's income in their household. The case of *Nonghyeop*, a commercial bank affiliated to the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, provides a good example of gender-discriminated restructuring of Korean banks¹¹⁵. In the process of *Nonghyeop's* downsizing in January 1999, the employers explicitly forced married women with husbands working in the same bank to resign from their jobs. The female workers were threatened that their husbands would be suspended from their work by force unless they made a voluntary retirement. As a result, 752 persons out of the total 762 married couples working in the same bank were removed from their workplace and 688 persons (91 per cent) of them were women. Some of these women were re-hired for the same tasks as their previous ones but on a fixed-term contract. This case was later recognised as a gender discriminatory lay-off practice of the bank. In addition, it was also revealed that *Nonghyeop* downsized its workforce in the name of restructuring despite its surplus management. This case was later sent to the court as a case of an unfair labour practice against the equal employment law protecting gender equality in workplaces. The court decided in favour of the employers¹¹⁶ (Cho 2000a: 138; Shin 2002:48; Working Voice 2003).

In addition, banks strategically attempted to transform the tellers' working status from permanent to non-permanent. To achieve this, they required most tellers to resign and re-enter the same jobs as newly recruited non-regular workers, receiving about 70 per cent or less of their previous income (Kim, J. G. 1999; Cho 2000a). As a result, a large number of tellers, mostly women, had to leave their jobs and many of them regained their jobs on the basis of full-time or part-time status with a fixed-term. As represented in Table 6.2, the ratio of non-regular to the total workforce increased from 7.8 per cent in 1997 to 20.3 per cent in 1999. The table also shows that a majority of females were recruited with non-regular status.

Table 6.2 Changes in the non-regular workforce in Korean banks, 1997-99 (per cent)¹

	Ratio of non-regular to the total workforce	Gender ratio of newly-employed workers' status (Female to male)	
		regular	non-regular
1997	7.8	45.7	76.3
1998	14.7	31.2	56.9
1999	20.3	25.5	80.1

¹ The data was collected from 24 nationwide banks.

Source: Korean Federation of Financial Labour Unions (KFFLU), 2000. *The Data for Women's Labour in the Banking Industry, 1997-99*.

In 1999, 34.4 per cent of employees were removed from their jobs, but the job decline for women with regular employment conditions was far greater than for men. Meanwhile, the size of the non-regular workforce grew considerably during the same time period and the female workforce constituted 90 per cent of them at a rough estimate (Kwun 2001). The over-representation of women in the banks' non-regular workforce has continued up until the present. According to the data released by the Korean Financial Industry Union, the ratio of

non-regular workers in the total bank workforce in 2002 accounted for 21.8 per cent and 84 per cent of them were women (Working Voice 2003). The gender-biased labour policies, including female-unfavourable lay-off criteria and new recruitment of women in only non-regular positions, significantly accounted for the asymmetric employment changes by gender in the post 1997 banks. Therefore, women workers became more marginalised in the banks, suffering from less stable and secure employment conditions compared to the pre-crisis period.

6.2.2 Survey and interview analysis

In order to look at employment changes in post 1997 banks, the author conducted a questionnaire survey with bank employees from October to November in 2001. The total number of respondents was 108 from eight different banks¹¹⁷ located in Seoul, 55 of them were female and 53 were male. In addition to the survey, I had in-depth interviews with eight of the respondents, two men and one woman separately, and five women in a group. These survey analyses and personal interviews provide practical evidence in support of the gender-differentiated employment changes discussed with the secondary employment data in the previous section.

Among the total survey respondents 58.2 per cent of the female workforce was in charge of telling and customer services compared to 15.1 per cent of men. The top three occupations in which the female respondents were participating were telling (41.9 per cent), customer service (16.4 per cent), human and branch management and assistant (16.4 per cent). On the other hand, those for men were

loans (47.2 per cent), research or computer-related tasks (22.6 per cent), and telling (15.1 per cent).

Not all of the respondents of the survey underwent the bank restructuring of 1998; 46 females and 45 males of the group of 108 did. About a half of these respondents (23 women and 21 men) answered that their employment conditions worsened in 1998¹¹⁸. For the question asking what conditions got worse, both male and female respondents (seven and 19 persons, respectively) most often stated an increase in the amount of work, followed by wage decline. This was mainly because those who survived the job-cuts had to be responsible for additional work previously done by other workers who left the workplace. In addition, three female respondents had their employment contract changed from full-time permanent to full-time fixed-term and two other females went through job demotion, while no man experienced either of these. The ratio of female workers who were changed to non-regular workers to the total 23 female respondents seemed to be smaller (13.0 per cent) in this survey, compared to the employment numerical data presented in the earlier section. However, according to the respondents, it was because the majority of female workers whose jobs were negatively affected during the employment restructuring of 1998 were discouraged from remaining in the workplace and thus quit their jobs permanently over time and only three of them still remained.

Regarding such job changes, one male interviewee in his late 30s said,

... in this restructuring process, the number of workers was greatly reduced, mostly the ones in charge of telling and customer service jobs replaced by the smaller number of non-

regular workers. However, this adaptation of the flexible labour management turned out to cause some critical problems, such as a rise in workload but for the smaller number of workers and too many different types of tasks for one person to deal with at the same time. Therefore, most of us have suffered from working overtime, about 14 hours a day in average. In this aspect, male workers do not prefer to work with married female colleagues who are not able to work overtime because of their family commitment.

Interestingly, in the survey male and female respondents showed considerably different perceptions of the question which asked, 'who, men or women, had to suffer more from negative employment changes during the time period and for what reason'. 51.1 per cent of male respondents saw the changes as gender neutral, while only 26.9 per cent of women did so¹¹⁹. 69.0 and 36.2 per cent of women and men respectively perceived women as undergoing more severe employment changes, including lay-offs, involuntary retirement, demotion, wage decline, and alteration of their contract from regular to non-regular. As reasons for this, the majority of both male and female respondents offered two equally important explanations. They were that women participated in less important jobs in banks, and that women were regarded as the non-breadwinners of their family. These answers indicate that family breadwinner ideology and marginalisation of women's jobs in the workplace offered justification of the unfair employment restructuring of the banks during the crisis-affected period.

Some respondents asserted that women left their jobs because of early retirement incentives. With regard to the early retirement program, one male interviewee in his early 30s said,

...after all, women were better off with the banks' restructuring program at that time. They took good advantage of receiving the incentives in their voluntary retirement and many of them were able to re-enter the workplace as a non-regular worker.

Subsequently, the author asked why, if the incentives contained better forms of benefits compared to the ordinary ones and also if men could re-gain their jobs by changing their employment status to a non-regular form just like women, men did not take the chance as often as women did. The male interviewee claimed,

... for the men in their active working ages, 30s and 40s, like me, the amount of the incentives was not enough to plan a new business with. Besides, there was little job opportunity given to us with only bank job experience at that time. Furthermore, working as a non-regular male teller was regarded as a shame and embarrassment in the Korean society and thus it was the last thing to do in bank men's career.

On the contrary, one female interviewee in her mid-30s disagreed with the male interviewee's point of view that women were better off with the banks' restructuring program. She said,

... during the economic restructuring of 1998, not only my workplace but also the whole society seemed to perceive that

women had to first remove themselves from work and return home. Moreover, they were expected to provide inward support to their male head of the family, who were seen as devoting themselves to get the national economy recovered from the crisis. In my workplace the ones who resisted to leaving their jobs were viewed as selfish and less committed to the maintenance of the wellbeing of the society. Thus, with increased uncertainty and insecurity of their jobs, many women preferred to resign when the early retirement package was offered. In my personal case, I remained in the workplace because I was responsible for looking after my family but had to go through job demotion by two levels and wage decline. This is how I could survive from the restructuring.

Among the total respondents of the survey, 13 of the 55 female workers were on either part-time or fixed-term contracts, while none of the men had a non-regular worker's status. In comparing regular and non-regular workers' conditions, the 13 non-regular workers found themselves treated differently from their colleagues with a full-time permanent position in terms of less employment benefits despite the similar or longer working hours. Table 6.3 shows the comparison of employment conditions between one non-regular (marked as A) and four regular workers (marked as B, C, D, and E). All five respondents were university graduates with the same 10-year working experience. A was working on the basis of a one-year renewable employment contract, while the rest were on a full-time permanent contract. Apparently, A received a lower level of income with no bonus and enjoyed only the benefits of health insurance, employment insurance and national pension.

Table 6.3 Comparison of employment conditions between non-regular (A) and regular workers (B, C, D, and E)

	A	B	C	D	E
Working period (year/month)	10/0	10/10	10/0	10/6	10/9
Weekly working hours	60	53	55	48	56
Wage (million won)	100-150	150-200	100-150	150-200	100-150
Annual bonus (per cent) ¹	No	90 ¹	90	100	80
Employment benefits					
- Health insurance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Employment insurance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Public pension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Children's education insurance				✓	✓
- Unemployment insurance		✓	✓	✓	✓
- Maternity leave		✓	✓	✓	✓
- Special leaves		✓	✓	✓	✓
- Paid overtime		✓		✓	✓
- Subsidy for external training		✓	✓	✓	✓
- Medical subsidy				✓	✓
- Subsidy for lease		✓	✓	✓	✓

¹ Annual bonus refers to extra payment apart from workers' annual income. For example, 90 per cent annual bonus means workers receive an amount equalling 90 per cent of their annual income separately from their wage, on a regular basis but usually not monthly.

Source: Moon, 2001. Survey Results, 'Changes in employment conditions during post 1997 Korean banks', Seoul.

On the other hand, the employment changes from regular to non-regular in Korean banks are often said to generate conflicts among workers with different employment conditions and hence diminishes the quality of their service. The author interviewed five female Korean bank employees regarding any changes occurring in their workplace after increases in the flexible use of labour. Four of them were working with either a fixed-term or temporary contract, while only one of them continued her full-time permanent position. One of the significant findings through the interview is that all interviewees showed little satisfaction with their job quality and conditions. For instance, the four contingent workers asserted,

...we often feel frustrated by the fact that our workload was as much as other full-time permanent workers' but we are treated differently in terms of poor employment benefits and exclusion in the workplace from our colleagues with a full-time permanent position. As a result, it caused us to become less responsible for and attached to our work after the change in our job status.

Meanwhile, regarding changes in regular workers' job quality and conditions, one full-time permanent worker said,

...I am the only female teller who remains without changing the contract status in my workplace but, after all, my workload and responsibility has increased considerably. Besides my own work, I am also assigned to take responsibility for the work done by other contingent tellers.

In addition, as well as the other four interviewees, she found her job very unstable and insecure because of possible job deterioration in the future. Therefore, the findings of the interview revealed that the change of employment and working environment in the Korean banks affected individual workers to a large extent by generating invisible barriers between workers with different employment status. Moreover, as workers saw their job as unstable and insecure, they were less attached to their job which further resulted in providing customers with relatively poor quality of service.

6.3 Apparel industry

The apparel industry is famous as an export-oriented industry with high female labour intensity worldwide. The industry has also made a significant contribution to Korean economic growth, and has accounted for a great deal of women's labour participation from the 1960s to the present as well as the textile industry. However, since the early 1980s changes in both global and domestic market environments, including imposition of more-developed countries' quantitative restrictions on textile and apparel imports and increases in domestic production costs, have weakened the price competitiveness of Korean exports in the international market (Kang 2001). As a consequence, the contribution of the apparel industry has declined in terms of economic production and workforce participation. This has particularly impacted on women. In terms of the workforce share in the Korean apparel industry 65.2 per cent of the total workforce was female in 1995, which appeared to be reduced by 9.4 per cent compared to 74.6 per cent in 1985. Additionally, most of the apparel firms in which a majority of female workers are represented have been small and micro-sized (Chang et al. 1995; Choi and Lee 1997).

The apparel industry is one of the major industries representing the characteristics of labour arrangements on the basis of male bias in Korea (Lee, O. J. 1993; Park 1995). Gender-based task segregation in production has been regarded as a major mechanism to differentiate labour controls between male and female workers. Thus, different types of jobs for each sex are already set from the job entry level; women are engaged in sewing and finishing pieces, whereas men are involved in engineering, machine maintenance, cutting, ironing, and

operating specialized machines (Chang et al. 1995; Lee, O. J. 1993). Moreover, vertical gender allocation in jobs appears as well, resulting from hierarchy in authority relations. That is, men are usually seen in high levels of supervisory and managerial positions, while women are limited to promotion to the lowest supervisory levels.

Labour conditions in the industry have been poor for both sexes but women have suffered more. For instance, the ratio of female to male wage in the industry was shown as 56.8, 58.4 and 59.3 per cent in 1980, 1990 and 2000 respectively (Seguino 1997; MOLAB 2002). Additionally, the ratio of female wages in the industry to that for the total manufacturing was only 67.5 and 65.3 per cent in 1994 and 2000 respectively. On the other hand, in 1985 female workers' average working hours per month in the industry was 241.8, and 46.7 per cent of it was overtime work¹²⁰. However, the monthly working hours declined to as low as 186.4 in 2000 and 19.5 per cent of the hours was overtime work (MOLAB 2002).

Changes in age structure of the female workforce in the industries are noticeable in recent decades. During the early booming period of the industry, specifically in the 1970s and 1980s young single women in their late teens and early 20s made up the majority of the female workforce. In 1983, 81.6 per cent of female workers in the industry were younger than 25 years, as compared with 30.4 per cent of men (MOLAB 2002). The dominance of young female workers in the industry coincides with many studies in developing economies arguing that young single women are preferred in labour-intensive production because they are more willing to work for lower wages than men, be more submissive to authority, and are less experienced in organising labour unions (Lee, O. J. 1993; Park 1995). In addition,

young girls' economic contribution is regarded as a crucial family income source supporting their poor families (Lee, O. J. 1993; Pearson 1991).

In Korea one of the methods that employers used to maintain higher participation rates among younger women was to discourage workers from remaining longer than a few years in a workplace by providing neither a tenure-based wage nor promotion system (Lee, O. J. 1993). At the same time employers encouraged young girls, particularly in their late teens, to stay for at least three years in the workplace by providing factory dormitories and factory schools providing middle or high school education. Most dormitories offered poor living conditions including poor meals, tight working schedules and employer interference in their private lives (for instance, restrictions on trips outside their dormitory). Nonetheless, this housing and education provision increased young girls' dependency on their employers and they remained in the same workplace for at least three years of their middle or high school education period. In this way the girls also could save more money to send back home as most of them were working to support their poor family (Lee, O. J. 1993).

However, a dramatic shift in the age structure of female workers in the industries took place during the last couple of decades. Diversification of the manufacturing industry and expansion of the service industry in recent years have introduced a number of better paying or easier jobs, such as office or sales clerks in the Korean economy. For instance, the ratio of female wages in the apparel industry to those in banking and finance industry was 70.3 per cent in 1993 (MOLAB 2002). In addition, an increase in schooling years

has contributed to an improvement of young workers' skill levels. Meanwhile, since the beginning of the 1980s, a number of both domestic and international firms have begun to relocate their production to foreign countries in pursuit of better production conditions such as lower wage workforce and the use of capital-hosting countries' export quotas (Kang 1995). As a consequence, low-paying manufacturing jobs are less attractive to young girls so that the apparel industry has faced difficulty in finding a sufficient workforce, particularly young workers (Kim, K. H. 1996). Thus, the number of the workforce in the industries has significantly declined from the late 1980s to the present. In the case of the apparel industry the percentage of the total female workers under 25 in 1995 fell as low as 28.2 per cent from 74.6 per cent in 1985, whereas the number of women over 25 has increased comparatively (Choi and Lee 1997).

The apparel industry has been important for Korea's economic development as well as for women's workforce participation. Regardless of the fluctuations in the life of the industry over decades, women have made up the majority of the workforce in the industry. However, their marginal working conditions – with lower wages than in other manufacturing industries, a gender gap in wages, low job security and segmentation into low-profile occupations – have prevented women from fully benefiting from the advancement of the industry. The labour shortage, especially young male and female workers, has come to be one of the major concerns in the industry since the 1990s due to the changes in both labour demand and supply conditions up to the present.

6.3.1 Apparel industry in post 1997 period

The survey conducted by the Korean Federation of Textile Industries (henceforth KOFTI) focused on the 1998 recession period (KOFTI 1999) and recorded various changes, including business sales, types of business and employment conditions, in the Korean apparel industry. 365 KOFTI member firms were examined in the survey and 97.5 per cent of them were located in the Seoul area. Table 6.4 shows the changes in the apparel business sales in both domestic and international markets in 1998.

Table 6.4 Changes in the importance of export and domestic sales in the apparel industry, 1997-98 (per cent)

	Total	Export	Domestic
1997	100	30.5	69.5
1998	100	52.9	47.1
Changes in sales (97-98)	-9.4	+57.2	-38.6

¹. Annual average of foreign exchange rate: 1997 (1997: 1\$=951.11won, 1998: 1\$=1,398.88 won)

Source: Korean Federation of Textile Industries (KOFOTI), 1999. *Textile Year Book*, Seoul.

Due to the decline in domestic consumption in 1998, the domestic sales fell drastically by 22.4 per cent compared to 1997. In contrast, exports grew as a result of the depreciation of the Korean currency affected by the crisis.

Notably, subcontracting prevailed in the Korean apparel industry as Table 6.5 shows. In order to enhance price competitiveness in both domestic and international markets, big firms tended to minimise costs and risks by hiring contractors for production, instead of investing capital for their own manufacturing facilities. It was considered easy for workers to open their own apparel factory as long as they could afford a place to work and sewing machines to

work with. The poor income level was a major driving force for workers to start their own businesses as subcontractors. As a result, the number of subcontracting factories, which were vulnerable to business cycles, had been substantially growing, but many were micro small-sized home factories with only two or three employees and often without an official registration (KOFOTI 1999).

Table 6.5 Apparel factories by type of business, 1993 and 1997-98 (number and per cent)

	1993	1997	1998
Non-subcontract	353 (22.0)	116 (10.7)	92 (7.7)
Subcontract	1,249 (78.0)	965 (89.3)	1,104(92.3)
Total	1,602	1,081	1,196

Source: Korean Federation of Textile Industries (KOFOTI), 1999. *Textile Year Book*, Seoul.

In most cases these home factories did not provide a good quality of working environment. According to NSO (1996), 76.0 per cent of total apparel companies in Korea had four or fewer employees in 1995. Consequently, this growing trend to small and subcontract types of business is regarded as a major cause of the worsening employment environment and conditions in the Korean apparel business.

The number in the workforce in the industry has significantly declined from over the recent decades. For instance, among KOFOTI firms, merely 59.6 per cent of the 1993 total workforce appeared in the apparel industry in 1998 and this fell by 2.8 per cent from 1997. The share of female to the total workforce in 1998 was 68.2 per cent, which grew from 65.9 per cent in 1995. By 1999 it has increased to 70.3 per cent¹²¹ (MOLAB 2003). However, as represented in Table 6.6, the increase in the number of the workforce was primarily made by

changes in the number of female workers in the industry who differed in terms of age. The number of young women under the age of 30 was on the decline from 1997 to 1998, while the number of those over the age of 30 was on the rise. For instance, during one year 1998, the percentage of the female workers over 30 years old among the total female workforce in the industry increased as high as approximately 4.0 per cent¹²². Considering the fact that the proportion of women in the total employment rose during the recession period and the new recruits appeared to belong to the age group 30s or over, these recruits might be married women who entered the labour market due to financial difficulties in their household economy. In other words, the increase in married women in this industry during the recession period is related to the 'added workers effect' in the apparel industry.

Table 6.6 Changes in employees by age group in apparel factories, 1993 and 1997-99 (per cent)

	1993	1997	1998
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
> 20	8.2	4.0	2.3
21-30	55.4	51.8	49.3
31-40	24.4	29.1	32.5
41-50	9.1	11.3	12.0
50 and over	2.9	3.8	3.9

Source: Korean Federation of Textile Industries (KOFOTI), 1999. *Textile Year Book*, Seoul.

Table 6.7 represents employees by gender in apparel factories in 1998. The gender ratios in most of the occupations are seen to be fairly uneven. For instance, the female workforce is dominantly located in design, skilled, and unskilled production, whereas men are largely seen in office work, research, and managerial in production. This is

evidence of gender segregation by occupation at both vertical and horizontal levels.

Table 6.7 Employees in occupation by gender in apparel factories, 1998 (per cent)

	Clerical work	Research	Design	Managerial in production	Production		Others	Total
					Skilled ^a	Unskilled ^b		
Total	45.2	0.3	2.8	6.9	24.4		20.4	100
Male	66.8	62.5	10.9	67.5	27.1	23.7	39.7	44.9
Female	33.2	37.5	89.1	32.5	72.9	76.3	60.3	50.1

^a Skilled: tailoring, sawing, patterning

^b Unskilled: skilled workers' assistant jobs

Source: Korean Federation of Textile Industries (KOFOTI), 1999. *Textile Year Book*, Seoul. Korean Apparel Industry Association (KAIA), 1999. *The Textile Industry: report on changes in production lines of 1998*, Seoul.

The annual average wage level rose more than 10 per cent in the 1990s although the growth slowed down from 1997. Yet the wage and annual bonus grew as high as 8.9 and 4.5 per cent respectively in 1997 compared to the previous year. However, in 1998 wage growth stopped while the annual bonus continued to increase. The wage level showed 5.1 per cent of positive growth but the annual bonus fell by 60.3 per cent in 1999. These wage changes appeared almost the same between men and women.

Table 6.8 Annual wage growth in apparel factories in 1997-99 (per cent)

	Monthly basic wage	Annual Bonus	Monthly working hours
1997	8.9	4.5	2.6
1998	-0.7	12.7	-0.9
1999	5.1	-60.3	2.6

Source: MOLAB, 2003. *The Survey on Wage Structure*, Seoul.

6.3.2 Survey and interview analyses

In order to look at employment changes during the recession period and employment conditions in the industry at present, the author conducted questionnaire surveys of 89 apparel workers (18 men and 71 female workers) from 24 different firms in the Seoul area¹²³. In terms of age, a majority of respondents (17 male and 45 female workers) were over the age of 30. Among 81 respondents who identified their employment status, 12 male and 35 female workers had regular contracts and two male and 24 female workers were part-timers. One male and seven female workers were employed on a temporary basis.

Among the respondents, eight took part in the individual interviews following the survey. All were labour unionists, four from *Cheonggaecheon* Apparel Labour Union¹²⁴, based on micro- or small-size factories, and four from the Korean Federation of Textile Trade Union¹²⁵ (hereafter KOFTTU), based largely on small and medium-size factories. All worked in different workplaces. Three were men and five were women. Two were in their late 20s, another two in their early 30s, three in their late 30s, and one in her early 50s. The surveys and interviews were designed to solicit male and female workers' perceptions of gender differences in their workplaces and to address issues relating to their current employment conditions, specifically changes that occurred after the 1997 Korean financial crisis.

To the first question asking if there was any negative employment change in their workplace in 1998, seven male and 49 female workers responded positively. According to them, despite the firms' stable

business status in the year, their employer conducted unfair workers' dismissal (stated by four women), postponed the payment (stated by two men and nine women), and reduced the wage (stated by eight women). Additionally, 19 female respondents said that their employers increased the amount of the individual workload without a wage rise. Finally, three men and seven women experienced their employers' verbal threat of possible dismissal of the employees in the future, and they were forced to be submissive in the workplace.

To the same question, all of the interviewees agreed that the 1997 economic downturn had a negative impact on their employment conditions. Two of the workers' greatest concerns were declining wages and decreasing job security since 1997. However, all of them asserted that their workloads had increased after the crisis because of the boom in exports that resulted from the dramatic depreciation of Korean foreign currency. At the same time, however, their employers cut their annual wage levels, or delayed payment on the pretext of financial difficulties, supposedly to be dealt with in the future. Some employers threatened individual workers with the possibility of factory closure or relocation. All of the interviewees saw this as a devious way of compelling workers to submit at work. The deviousness of the interviewees' employers was also evident in the reduction of wages and employers' tardiness in bringing them back up to their proper levels. The employers again used the crisis to justify these actions, while the workers understood this to be an excuse rather than a real reason. Interviewees thought this was proved by the fact that none of the factories had closed.

Regarding such changes, one female worker from KOFTTU said,

... at the very beginning of 1998 the employer announced that it was inevitable to have wage cuts, specifically a freeze of wage level the same as the previous year's and reduction of annual bonus by a half, until the company's financial situation would get better. In fear of being discharged, all workers agreed to the wage reduction and no payment for extra work on holidays. However, it took longer than three years for us to restore the 30 per cent wage cut in my workplace despite the company's improving financial condition since the country's economic recovery of 1999.

To the question about gender differentials in employment changes during the crisis-affected period, 29 people responded. 16 of the respondents perceived the destructive employment changes to be gender-neutral and one man and five women thought male workers were more seriously affected because of their higher-wage level. Meanwhile, seven female respondents said that the crisis had more negative impact on women than men. Among the interviewees, the responses between the *Cheonggaecheon* Apparel Labour Union and KOFTTU workers appeared somewhat different. One female interviewee from the *Cheonggaecheon* Apparel Labour Union asserted that male workers were affected by the crisis more than female workers in her workplace. She said,

... my workplace is small-sized with 23 employees in total. In 1998, some male workers, particularly experienced tailors, were first discharged because of their relatively higher wage levels, while female workers, mostly involved in sewing or assisting skilled workers, could remain at work. The vacant tailoring positions were replaced by new male tailors who

were waged lower than the previous ones or male independent contractors who worked based upon temporary contract bases.

One male unionist, a tailor himself, from the same union added that after the crisis a number of male tailors were forced to leave their workplace because of the higher wage costs or removed themselves voluntarily due to lack of job security in the apparel companies. Many of them turned into independent (subcontracted or outsourced) contractors, who appeared more attractive to employers due to their employment flexibility¹²⁶. However, these individual workers appeared to have difficulties in getting sufficient jobs because of the contraction of domestic consumption at that time.

According to a male *Cheonggaecheon* Apparel Labour Unionist, who was in charge of the union's administrative job, the Seoul apparel workers were largely divided into three groups depending on the size of firms or the market value of the goods they produce. Workers' mobility across groups was exceedingly limited, largely because jobs in the industry were usually gained through personal connections among workers and employers in the same group. The majority of the members in his union were from micro or small-size firms, mostly subcontracting, and thus their employment conditions were generally less privileged than those in other groups in terms of workers' rights and benefits. However, in this group the labour supply seemed to exceed the labour demand as a whole.

The interviewees from KOFTTU asserted that job changes occurred quite fairly between male and female workers in their workplace. The main reason for this was said to be the difficulty in finding

apparel workers, including both male and female skilled workers, due to the declining popularity of the jobs in the industry. According to the interviewees from KOFFTU, their firms, largely focused on exports, were not affected by the crisis as much as others due to the boom in apparel exports despite the contraction of the domestic market at that time. Therefore, their jobs remained relatively stable compared to the micro or small-size firms focused on the domestic market.

The existence of the trade union in each workplace, led by female union leaders and belonging to KOKTTU, appeared as another important reason. Each of the four interviewees was working in a medium-sized company with more than 200 employees and some capital-intensive machines. Women were over represented in each company. Amongst the four companies, three had a female workforce accounting for over 70 per cent of the total workforce and one had the exceptionally asymmetric gender ratio of 95 per cent of women to 5 per cent of men. Therefore, they found that female workers in their firms seemed to have more active labour union activities and, as a result, they were able to have more bargaining power in negotiation with their management.

As a result, summarising the job changes in the two different cases, small-size firms discharged high-wage male workers disproportionately. However, those jobs were substituted not by female workers but by new male workers who were lower-waged or independent contractors who could be more easily removed at the demand of employers. Meanwhile, in relatively larger firms, the jobs of both male and female workers remained relatively stable due to the consistent level of the labour demand but somewhat insufficient

labour supply. In particular, trade unions with female workers' active participation tended to reduce gender differences in employment.

In terms of task segregation by gender, all interviewees agreed that there were different jobs for men and women from the entry level and this was a major mechanism to keep wage differences between men and women. According to the survey outcome, the most common jobs that the respondents were involved in were tailoring (seven men and two women), pattern (three men and two women), sewing (no man and 34 women), sewing assistant (one man and six women), and others such as inspection, designing, wrapping, and finishing pieces. Regarding the reasons for the task segmentation by gender, most workers (nine male and 31 female workers) chose different skills between men and women as their first reason, followed by physical difference by gender (four men and 20 women). Seven female workers considered that the segmentation is made due to their employer's biased staffing management, while gender stereotypes (one man and four women) and trade union (two women) appeared as other reasons.

The author asked the interviewees what segregates those jobs by gender and the two male workers and the six female workers responded differently. The male workers, who were engaged in tailoring jobs themselves, said,

... women are not suitable for tailoring jobs because they require strong physical strength to work with big rolls of heavy cloth and good skills to deal with complicated designs. Female workers usually have weaker physical strength and

poor ability to learn complicated skills, and thus they are not qualified for the job men perform.

Differently from the male workers' opinion, one female worker in her 30s said,

... although it could be somewhat true that female workers are physically weaker than men, but we often move big rolls of cloth as men do when we are told to do so. It means that women are capable of performing tailoring work in terms of physical strength. However, we are not able to cut and pattern because the necessary skills for the jobs are not taught to us.

For the reason why the skills are not taught to women, one female worker in her early 50s claimed,

... men usually refuse to teach their tailoring skills to women because they feel fearful of losing their jobs by being taken over by women in the future. Men know they consist of a minority workforce in this industry. Thus, men believe they maintain their dominant power in the workplace as long as they keep the skilled jobs exclusively.

On the other hand, another female worker in her 30s claimed that the barrier between men and women's jobs is weakening to some extent because of insufficient labour supply, especially young skilled male workers. She said, 'a number of machine-based jobs, particularly computerised ones, have been taken over by young skilled women in my workplace, and it is largely due to scarcity of male workers in the industry'.

Another gender difference was illustrated in labour union activities according to the female workers. For instance, one female worker in her 30s said, 'women are not preferred as company union leaders because employers would not regard women as an appropriate negotiating partner from the labour side'. As a result, KOFTTU, consisting of 350 enterprises with more than 80 per cent of female members, had only 12 female union leaders out of 350. One interviewee in her early 30s from KOFTTU said,

... in my company if there is one male worker, he becomes a union leader regardless of his age or working position. This is because all female workers know through their own direct or indirect experiences that any of them would not be approved as a leader by an employer and other male unionists.

An interesting aspect of the union-side of this discrimination is the 'feedback effect' of discrimination asserting that women are less willing to make an effort to improve a situation if they know they are discriminated against based on their gender traits, and continue to stay in disadvantaged positions in the labour market (Blau and Ferber 1992:210; Loury 1998).

6.4 Gender-differentiated employment adjustment in Hyundai Motor Company

In this section, the Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) is examined as a case study showing unfair gender-differentiated employment changes against women by a male-dominant labour union and management (Cho 2000:303-5; Lee, J. S. 2002:180-9; Womenlink 2003). HMC, established in 1968 for automobile production is the largest

car company in Korea, belonging to the Hyundai Business Group. Based on the state's policy, 'Long-term Plan for the Development for the Car Industry', the Park military government assisted HMC's development of a mass produced motor car from the early 1970s (Kwon 2001:59). Under the condition of HMC's development of its own model, the government offered business incentives, for instance, by restricting foreign car imports and limiting other domestic motor car companies' emergence as assemblers. From 1978, however, HMC began its overseas market expansion and it was 1983 when HMC first made its shipment of automobiles to a foreign country, Canada.

HMC's workforce grew considerably after the introduction of a mass production system in automobile manufacturing in the mid 1970s. *Ulsan*, a city located in the southeast part of South Korea became the base camp of HMC production. Similar to other male-dominated heavy industries, men accounted for a majority of the HMC workforce in production. Women were under-represented in the HMC workforce and they were primarily located in less prestigious and less skilled occupations, mostly with a non-regular employment status (KWWAU 2004).

Despite the existence of suitable conditions for the organised labour movement in HMC such as a large-scale workforce and strict supervision in the 1980s, it was not until 1987 that a labour union was first created in HMC (Koo 2001:238-250; Kwon 2003). The main reason for this is related to HMC's repressive labour controls supported by the state that had strong economic ties with the family owned conglomerates (*jaebeol*). The strategy of decentralization of HMC production to foreign countries from the mid 1980s was one of the important reasons for the emergence of the labour movement in

1987. Since 1987, the HMC union, as well as other trade unions (i.e. Hyundai Heavy Industry) of the Hyundai Business Group, has been one of the most powerful enterprise unions in Korea, playing a role in leading Korea's militant-style labour movement with male intensity (Koo 2001:238-250). Nonetheless, HMC continuously reduced the number of workers through automation of its production and increases in both domestic and overseas subcontractors prior to the crisis.

6.4.1 HMC in post 1997 period

Affected by the crisis, the domestic car market shrank immediately. Facing a decline in car sales and the strong demand of the government-led enterprise restructuring, in July 1998 HMC management informed the labour union of its downsizing program, including the plan to lay-off 8,189 production workers through voluntary retirement. In response to the management, the labour union proposed an alternative to employment restructuring, including reduction in working hours and wages, and workers' unpaid temporary job leaves in rotation, instead of forceful lay-offs. However, management insisted on the dismissal of redundant workers and finally performed the lay-offs twice despite the union's continuous efforts to stop the forceful dismissal by revising the negotiation proposal in favour of the management. Finally, when management announced the name list of workers for the third lay-off, the union confronted management with a general labour strike in the workplace, lasting for almost a month.

The battle between management and the labour union came to an end through the government's intervention as an arbitrator. Under

the government's persuasion, management agreed to minimise the number of workers to be laid off and the union agreed to accept management's revised lay-off proposal. 277 workers had to be dismissed¹²⁷. However, among the 277 workers, 144 of them were females working in the company cafeterias¹²⁸ and the rest of them were male workers from the production. The union's agreement to the proposal was a great shock to the female workers¹²⁹ who were actively participating in the general strike, not only attending the collective actions but also providing all the unionists in the strike with three meals everyday.

Male unionists returned to work after the agreement but the female workers remained on strike by themselves against not only the management but also the male-dominated union's decision. Facing the cafeteria workers' prolonged strike, the HMC management and the union came to an agreement that the union would take over the right of cafeteria management from the HMC management and run it as the union's subcontracted business. Consequently, the female workers had to be re-hired by the union as their subcontracted workers, gaining the same jobs but with only sixty per cent of their previous wage. In addition, their workload increased significantly because the number of workers fell by half as a result of the adjustments. Nonetheless, the agreement included that those workers would return to their former positions and it offered regular workers' rights and benefits if the company's business would normalise in the future. As a result, although the female workers were not in favour of the new working conditions, they returned to work with the hope of re-gaining their former position in the future.

However, these cafeteria female workers undertook another strike action one year after the completion of the previous one. The company had fully recovered from the economic difficulties brought by the crisis but refused to reinstate the workers to their former position. To make the situation worse, the labour union rejected the female workers' request to raise the matter for discussion in the labour-management meeting (*Hankyoreh*, 22 September 2003; Womenlink 2003). With the goal of returning to their former position, they fought strenuously against both management and union over 11 months from August 1999 to June 2000 and they finally achieved what they fought for¹³⁰.

It has been argued that the female workers' struggles in HMC over three years were a joint product of the three male-dominated organisations of the state, the management, and the labour union in the process of the neo-liberal market restructuring. At that time, the government was encouraging firms to perform employment restructuring by allowing numerical changes in the workforce nationwide. Therefore, the government officers saw HMC's case important because it could become a good example to other firms, showing a cooperative employment adjustment between management and a labour union. As a result, the government made a great effort to lead both management and the labour union to an agreement with little attention to fairness of employment adjustment.

On the other hand, the management of HMC has been criticised for what it aimed to gain from the persistent struggles caused by the employment dismissal plan as being not only economic but also political-related. This criticism is based upon the fact that the company did not have a serious management problem during the

crisis-affected period because it appeared to expand the business to other sectors and other firms through a series of mergers and acquisitions. As a result, it has been said that what the management actually intended to gain at that time was to dismantle the labour union's power and, at the same time, to increase the negotiation power with the government regarding the state-led *jaebeol* reform¹³¹ (Cho 2000b; Lee, J. S. 2002:187). In addition, it was noted that the HMC management had attempted to transform the cafeteria management pattern from HMC-owned to a sub-contracted operation over the ten years before the crisis but the transformation was not achieved because of the union's disagreement. Therefore, HMC workers perceived that management was using the recession time in achieving its 10-year old strategy in the name of employment adjustment (Korea Working Women's Network 2004).

Finally, the male union leadership could not avoid the criticism that they had made the female workers scapegoats for the sake of other male workers' employment security (Cho 2000:300; LARNET 2003; Lee, J. S. 2002:190; Womenlink 2003). Dismissal of these women was not consistent with the original reason that management offered for the labour reform because the cafeteria workers were not redundant employees. These cafeteria ladies appeared as 'flowers' during the general strike because of their presence with male unionists but later became scapegoats for the peaceful settlement of the labour dispute led by men (*Hankyoreh*, 25 March 2002). Looking back over the three-year struggle, the leader of the female workers' union, Choi Jong-Hee, said during a newspaper interview that the most difficult part of their struggle was the confrontation with male unionists who were friends with them yesterday but turned out to be the enemies today. She mentioned that some male unionists openly criticized the female

workers as being too selfish because they were not satisfied with the current position that they had as subcontracted workers (*Yeoseongsinmun*, 05 October 2001).

6.5 Conclusion

Using the examples of the banking industry, the apparel industry and HMC, this chapter has shown that Korea's employment adjustment in the 1997 crisis-affected period occurred along gender lines. As explained in the previous chapters, under the government-led structural reform based on the neo-liberal labour approach, corporate restructuring focused on the downsizing of the workforce in pursuit of wage cost reduction. The Korean government took legal steps to make it easier for employers to discharge workers or downsize their workforce and urged firms to reform their workplaces. The case studies have illustrated that all three industries intensified the neo-liberal employment approach after 1997, primarily through dismissal of workforce, wage moderation, and increase in more flexible forms of employment. They have also shown that firms shifted employment activities to 'periphery' firms such as outsourcing and subcontracting firms in response to the drive towards leaner production and minimising the workforce. Moreover, the evidence represented in this chapter, including the cases of *Nonghyeop* bank, HMC, and some interviews with the apparel industry workers, has revealed that employers used the government-led labour restructuring as an opportunity to reduce wage costs by downsizing their workforce or to compel workers to submit at work despite stable business operation after the crisis.

Employment adjustment based on the dismissal of redundant workers and expansion of non-regular workers penalised the Korean workers and threatened their right to live by means of their labour. While both men and women suffered from the destructive changes in employment, women suffered more than did men due to women's inferior workers' status in terms of organisational representation and occupational concentration in less prestigious positions. Most of all, based on male breadwinner bias, labour market actors took the prevalence of discriminatory employment practices against women for granted. As a result, firms' employment adjustment based on the SAPs, but with little consideration for fair employment policies, exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and gender biases in employment.

The case studies of the commercial banking industry, apparel industry, and HMC have demonstrated important empirical evidence that female workers were more vulnerable to the changes in employment through dismissal of workforce, decline in wages, and replacement of regular workers with non-regular workers. The labour market actors, including the government, managements, and labour unions, were in favour of male workers during the adjustment period and gave a priority to men in employment. As a result, a larger number of women compared to men had to leave the workplace and transform their employment form from regular to non-regular during the adjustment period. More seriously, women's entry to new positions was confined to part-time or time-limited employment, resulting in a furthering of marginalisation of women in the labour market. Therefore, the findings of these case studies coincide with the feminist critiques of post crisis employment adjustment, asserting that the hardships of adjustment are unequally

distributed between men and women, and pre-existing social constraints make it difficult for women to have an equal access to resources.

Finally, the three cases demonstrate that gender discrimination causing exclusion and segregation of female workers from occupations - especially more prestigious, better paid ones - have rigidly existed in the industries prior to and after the crisis. Based on gender discriminatory practices, labour market actors, including the state, employers, and male workers have kept women in a subordinate position in the workplaces. In particular, discrimination against women was effectively used to facilitate each of the actors' interests during the post 1997 employment adjustment period. First, it was useful for employers in satisfying the need for more flexible, lower wage female labour. Second, it was effective for male workers in protecting them from unemployment and it was largely accepted by the workers' unions in the industries. Third, it was useful to the state in achieving the employment adjustment relatively quickly and easily. In other words, in the face of massive unemployment, the state needed a stabilising element in society, such as the family as the social net and women as a cushioning of the negative impact of unemployment and underemployment.

Notes

¹¹² Kim showed an uneven distribution of male and female workers in the comprehensive and clerical positions by using one of the Korean banks as an example (1999:30). The bank used in his study had 1,534 workers (1,034 males and 500 females) in total in 1997. Among 1034 male workers, 992 of them were engaged in the comprehensive position and the rest of them were engaged in other

positions except for the clerical position. On the contrary, among 500 female workers, only 38 of them were involved in the comprehensive position while 459 of them were represented in the clerical position.

¹¹³ Korean financial sector weaknesses were seen as one of the most important causes of the Korean 1997 crisis, combined with macroeconomic vulnerability. Excessive capital inflows to Korea in the mid 1990s brought about rapid credit expansion, resulting in lowering the quality of credit and leading to asset price inflation. The inflated asset prices promoted further capital inflows and lending, often by inadequately supervised Korean financial institutions, including banks and nonbanks. Moreover, close relationships between government, financial institutions and corporate borrowers, who also had weakly supervised business operations, worsened the problems in line with weak accounting standards for loan valuation and disclosure practices (Coe and Kim:2002; Chung:2001:262-311; Lindgren et al.:1999; Smith: 1998:66-84).

¹¹⁴ The government-led restructuring of the banks continued until 2000. At the end of 2000, 11 out of 33 banks in 1997 were entirely withdrawn from the market (Lee, J. S. 2002:148).

¹¹⁵ Like *Nonghyeop*, *Jeil* Life Insurance is also well-known for the policy, 'only one family member in the workplace', which was less favourable to female workers.

¹¹⁶ The case of *Jeil* Life Insurance was also sent to the court and the court gave a verdict in favour of the plaintiffs. The details of this case are provided in the seventh chapter.

¹¹⁷ Among the eight banks, three of them had merged with other banks, one was newly-born by a merger of two banks, one was foreign-based, two were waiting for foreign investors, and one did not have to go through any merger or acquisition but downsized its business in 1998 (Lee, J. S. 2002:150).

¹¹⁸ Among 24 male and 23 female workers who stated that their employment conditions did not worsen in 1998, 18 males and 18 females said there were no changes in their employment and six male and five female workers said their employment conditions got better. Considering large-scale of the Korean bank restructuring in 1998, the number of the workers who responded negatively to employment changes seems low in this survey. As a reason for this, some interviewees stated that it is largely because many of those who faced difficulties in employment have already left their workplace during the employment adjustment so that they do not appear in the survey. Whether or not the respondents' employment conditions got better or worse depends considerably on what pattern of business restructuring their bank underwent. For instance, 16 people among 108 respondents in the survey worked at a foreign-based bank which was reportedly better off in 1998 due to its foreign ownership which guaranteed its relatively more stable business than domestic banks. 11 out of 16 respondents from the banks had no employment change. In addition, among the banks included in the survey, there were two banks waiting to be undertaken by foreign investors (categorised as Group A), which were more likely to have employment changes than the three banks that merged with other banks (categorised as Group B). In the case of Group A banks, 18 out of 26 respondents, equivalent to about 69 per cent of the total employees in Group A, experienced some type of negative employment changes, and, on the contrary, in Group B banks, 16 out of 40 respondents (40 per cent) had similar experiences.

¹¹⁹ 12.8 and 4.8 per cent of male and female respondents respectively believed that male workers had more severe employment changes. The respondents in the survey provided two main reasons. The first reason was related to the notion of man as a breadwinner of his family and the second was based on the view that many women could maintain their employment as non-regular workers although they were first dismissed, while this was not the case for men.

¹²⁰ An interesting finding in relation to working hours is that among 17 Asian countries Korea was the only one in which women worked longer hours than men in the 1980s, according to the ILO data (Park 1995).

¹²¹ The original source of these data was based upon 5,400 apparel firms with over five regular employees (MOLAB 2003).

¹²² Indeed, the apparel industry was having difficulty finding sufficient workforce, particularly young workers, due to its poor working conditions, including hard work, long overtime hours, and low wages since the late 1980s, and the increase in alternative jobs such as those in the service sector (Cho 1989).

¹²³ Seoul is the centre of national economic activities as well as the capital city of Korea. 77.3 per cent of the total Korean apparel firms (1,196) were located in the Seoul area in 1998, including its neighbour cities in *Kyeong-gi* province (KAIA 1999).

¹²⁴ *Cheonggaechon* is one of the well-known apparel production regions, particularly for its conventional and informal business operation in Seoul, Korea.

¹²⁵ KOFTTU belongs to FKTU, consisting of 28 different member industries, including textile, rail, metal, chemical, taxi, etc (FKTU 2002).

¹²⁶ Individual independent contractors are generally distinguished by two different groups, including home-based and self-employed, so called '*gaekgong*' in Korean. Homeworkers are those who get pieces of work done with their own sewing machines in their households by receiving payment on a piece-rate basis, and they are said to ensure optimal flexibility at lower cost than industrial labour (ILO 2000; Lee, O. J. 1993). Married women are the major homeworkers as they can manage both paid work and family commitments by working at home (KWWAU 1997). Meanwhile, *gaekgongs* are self-employed contractors who sometimes hire other workers, depending on the amount of contracted work and get it done with their own working machinery either in their main contractors' or their own workplace. These independent workers preferred to be self-contractors largely due to their flexibility in changing jobs quickly if there is a better-paying job (KWWAU 1997).

¹²⁷ 277 persons were far fewer than the number of workers that the management originally proposed, that is, 8,189 persons. However, through the two forceful restructuring processes, 8,171 persons already resigned their jobs in the pattern of voluntary retirement, and 1,916 persons took an unpaid fixed-term job leave. Therefore, the total number of workers that were affected by the three employment adjustments was greater than the number of workers originally planned (Lee, J. S. 2002:189).

¹²⁸ Before HMC's employment adjustment in 1998, 382 women were working in the cafeteria. After the first and second lay-offs (voluntary retirement), only 144 women were left in the workplace and all of them were targeted for the firms' forceful dismissal (Cho 2000b:304).

¹²⁹ The average age for these female workers were 48, and their average working period in the cafeteria was 14 years. More than 70 per cent of them were main income earners in their family (*Hankyoreh*, 22 September 2003).

¹³⁰ The whole real story about these women's struggles for two years was made as a documentary film called *Rice, Flower, and Scapegoat (Bop, Ggot, Yang)* by the Labour Reporter's Network (LARNET). This film was sent to the *Ulsan* Film Festival for Human Rights for screening in 2001. *Ulsan* is the city where Hyundai Motor is located. However, the Festival organisation intended to inspect the movie first and decide whether or not it could be screened during the Festival. The reason for this was because there were some anonymous phone calls questioning that the movie might include some false scenes. Later it was suspected that the phone calls might be from the Hyundai Motor's unionists. The film producer realised the organisation's intention for the precensorship against freedom of expression and requested the organisation to withdraw it. Due to the ongoing disagreement, LARNET refused to screen the film in the Festival and instead began to show it through the nationwide film tour (LARNET 2003).

¹³¹ The *jaebeols'* unhealthy business practices were blamed as the main cause of the economic problem. Followed by the IMF's strong call for the reform of the *jaebeols*, the Kim Dae-Jung government decided to lead the *jaebeol* reform by imposing five rules: 'business consolidation into core competence areas, capital structure improvement, elimination of cross-debt guarantee, enhancement of management transparency, and improvement of management accountability'. Later, three more rules were added to correct undesirable *chaebeol* practices: 'reduction of indirect cross ownership, prevention of anti-competitive intragroup transactions and unlawful insider trading, prevention of the evasion of inheritance and gift taxes' (Lee 2000). However, the outcome of the reform appeared unsuccessful due to *jaebeols'* unwillingness to change and, as a result, the *jaebeols'* problematic structure remains virtually unchanged.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I have examined the gender-differentiated employment changes in post 1997 Korea. The three central research questions of the thesis are how women's employment experiences were different from those of men, how individual workers themselves analysed employment changes in their workplace, and what factors account for gender-differentiated employment changes. Feminist analysis, developed as a critique of market-oriented economic analysis, has emphasized that two interacting systems, patriarchy and capitalistic mode of production are important in determining women's inferior status in both household and paid work. The analysis has also shown that the macroeconomic policies in the SAPs do not consider gender relations in the labour market. Therefore, discriminatory employment practices against women are ignored. The central finding of feminist analysis in general is that the hardships of recession and adjustments are unevenly distributed between men and women. I have argued that the combination of Korea's neo-liberal labour adjustment and patriarchal gender biases exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities in employment during the 1997 crisis-affected period. The results were a reinforcement of gender discrimination in the workplace, an increase in discouraged unemployment, a decline in women's employment, particularly in full-time permanent positions, and an expansion of female non-regular workforce.

The time period covered by this thesis for the major employment analysis is 1998 and 1999 when Korea's economy underwent a considerable level of fluctuation affected by the crisis. The reconstruction of the crisis-affected labour market was based on neo-liberal labour principles, emphasising a lean and flexible workforce. In order to help firms' employment adjustment, the country's labour law was quickly amended in early 1998, allowing firms' legal redundancy dismissal system for urgent managerial reasons and worker's dispatch system. For the sake of the national economic recovery, the state requested individual workers to endure personal difficulties brought by the crisis, including unemployment and wage reduction. Consequently, as firms proceeded with rigorous employment restructuring, the country marked the unprecedented high unemployment rate in 1998 of 6.3 per cent, equivalent to 1,461,000 people, up from 556,000 people in 1997. Moreover, firms began to expand the size of the non-regular workforce by replacing full-time permanent workers with short-term fixed, part-time, or outsourced workers.

For women, these changes had more obvious and often more severe effects. During the crisis-affected period, the role of the family intensified as the safety net for the economic difficulties brought by the crisis. In this process, women were called on to absorb and cushion the negative impact of the crisis in both household and paid work. On one hand, they were encouraged to provide comfort to other family members by encouraging their husband and children to cope well with the hardships of the recession and adjustments. On the other hand, if married women had an unemployed husband or one whose income had reduced, they were urged to make up their husband's income loss by participating in the workforce. However,

new female entries to the labour market were mostly destined for the secondary occupations, the more flexible, low skilled and low paid ones. Nonetheless, women's plight in the family and labour market was mostly taken for granted in society.

Job cuts for women workers in the 1998 recession were greater than those for men, and their job gains, mostly in 1999, were largely based on non-regular forms of employment. These employment changes for women could be explained by the theory that women function as a reserve army of labour which costs less and is more adaptive and responsive to changes in uncertain economic conditions. In addition, the substitution of lower-waged workers for higher-waged workers increased during the crisis-affected period, but it commonly happened only among the same gender group. In other words, differently from the substitution theory predicting an increase in women's employment in recessions due to firms' preference for women's lower-waged labour to men's higher-waged labour, instead women replaced either themselves or other women by accepting far fewer employment benefits and rights than had been offered previously. This was my most significant theoretical finding. The analyses of both nationwide employment data and empirical findings from the commercial banking, apparel, and HMC industries in this study have shown the relevance of these theories to the Korean case. Exceptionally, a very small number of the industries including the apparel industry show similar or better employment changes for women than men mainly due to women's lower wage level and the shortage of the workforce in certain industries.

In explaining the reasons for more negative job changes for women than men in 1998, this study has found that it was not primarily due

to the more severe decline in female-dominated industries than male-dominated industries. Rather, it was due to firms' discriminatory employment practices prioritising women for dismissal, or reducing or non-regularising workers in less important jobs in which a majority of women were concentrated. This study has shown that in the process of firms' post 1997 employment restructuring women were first to be discharged from their work, if they were in a dual income family and if they were located in women-dominated occupations in a workplace. In addition, in some workplaces, forced dismissal of female workforce for the reasons of marriage and pregnancy became more common. The three case studies of this thesis, including Korean banks, the apparel industry and HMC, have provided the evidence for such gendered processes of employment transformation. In particular, the fieldwork (interviews) in this study confirmed that firms' employment policies during the adjustment period were not gender neutral so that female workers experienced gender discrimination in their workplace. Therefore, the post 1997 employment adjustment reinforced Korea's gendered dual division of labour in terms of industrial and occupational distributions and employment benefits and rights. This indicates that non-rational market theories (labour market discrimination theories and gender related theories), rather than human capital theory, provide appropriate explanations for the employment changes between men and women during the 1997 crisis-affected period.

In this study, I have argued that gender differentials in the post crisis Korean labour market after 1997 are caused not only by the changes in economic conditions and neo-liberal employment adjustment but also by the patriarchal dichotomy of gender identities rigorously

prevailing in the society. The interaction between the economic and gender ideologies produced the gendered process of the social and work transformation. The dichotomy of gender identities in Korean work has been shaped and reinforced based on the country's long-established patriarchy and new material order of global capitalism. Korea hardly would be unique in this. However, the distinctive element of the Korean case is the interconnectedness of patriarchy and capitalism based on the cultural heritage of neo-Confucianism and the late-developmental state's compressed economic growth strategy.

The ideological teachings of neo-Confucianism embracing the hierarchical orders between men and women, the youth and the old, and individuals and the state leadership have been effective in shaping Korean women's identities as a (potential) dependent-housewife and, at the same time, a secondary/additional workforce in paid work. Women's inferior workforce status was formed under the former military state's repressive labour policies, which exploited women workers in the name of the national industrial development. These political, economic, and cultural systems have been important bases of the gendered structure of social institutions embracing family, education, and work in contemporary Korea. Discriminatory employment practices, exclusion and segregation are the major methods to marginalise women in employment (Choi, S. A. 2000). In many cases jobs are segregated by gender from the entry level to exit level in terms of hire, job allocation, promotion, training, wages, retirement and dismissal. Glass ceilings hinder women's promotion inside corporations and thus women are rarely seen in managerial or high-profile positions. These discriminatory practices through exclusion and segregation have a great impact on trade unions,

resulting in women's weak union participation and, significantly, little authority in decision-making processes. Nonetheless, employment discrimination against women was on the decline after the first introduction of the EEA in 1988. However, it was revived after 1997.

The outbreak of the unprecedented financial crisis intensified the need of leaner and more flexible labour operation for the survival of the economy. At the same time, it also strengthened social patriarchy or male dominance over women in society. Under special circumstances, such as unemployment and underemployment, both private and public firms' employment policies had a stronger focus on the concept of the male as a family breadwinner and primary worker in society, significantly undermining the importance of women's employment. As a result, firms' discriminatory employment policies and practices against women were largely taken for granted by the labour market actors, including the state, employers and male workers who generally benefit from patriarchal gender relations. For instance, gender discrimination was effectively used by employers in utilising a more flexible and lower paid female labour force. Women workers can be hired and dismissed more easily than men in response to uncertain labour market conditions. In addition, it was effective for male workers in maintaining their priority in employment and union activities. At the same time, the state rarely paid attention to women acting as a reserve army of labour during the economic recession because it needed female labour as a stabilising element in a society confronting massive unemployment. The revived gender discrimination in the context of the flexibilisation of the female workforce has persisted in the Korean

labour market despite the improvement in the country's economic conditions.

In this conclusion, I highlight the two themes that emerged as important throughout this thesis. Firstly, the criticism of Korea's neo-liberal labour approach is discussed. The criticism emphasizes gender-differentiated effects as a critical consequence of the country's neo-liberal labour reform. Secondly, major patterns of institutional and individual challenges to the gender-biased employment structure in post 1997 are examined. Specifically, the challenges are represented as the government, women's organisations, and individual female workers' efforts to stop firms' unfair employment practices against women based on labour laws, policies, and union movement.

7.2 The gender effects of neo-liberalism in the Korean labour market

As presented in chapter 5, one of the criticisms of Korean labour market restructuring is that it only focused on an increase in labour market efficiency, largely through reduction in labour costs by downsizing workforce or enhancing labour flexibility in terms of numerical, wage and working hours (Lee, J. S. 2002:237; Shin 2002:28). Post 1997 employers prefer to hire non-regular workers at relatively low cost although the market is in a stable condition. Workers who are fearful of long-term unemployment have no choice but to accept no matter what employers offer. In this labour market situation, Ahn (2002) said, 'the Korean labour market increasingly appears to be an employers' market'. Consequently, facilitation of

lay-offs, wage reduction, replacement of regular with non-regular workforce in the labour market with little employment protection has increased the extent of dual labour division between primary and secondary, resulting in vertical polarisation of individuals between the haves and the have-nots. Importantly, women's representation in the secondary (non-regular) labour group increased after 1997.

Moreover, 48.6 per cent of the total Korean workforce was regarded as low-income according to the OECD standard¹³² (Kim 2003b). Amongst low-income workers, one out of five regular workers and seven out of ten non-regular workers belonged to the low-income class. Moreover, among the 640,000 persons who received wages lower than the legal minimum wage level set by the Korean law, 620,000 persons appeared as non-regular workers. The increases in unemployment and non-regular forms of employment in the recent few years are significantly related to the emergence of 'people of the new poverty' (*sinbingoncheung*)¹³³, referring to people in unstable and insecure employment, including long-term unemployed people, non-regular workers, and people in debt. It has been reported that these people have increasingly been involved in suicide or money-related hate crimes such as fraud, kidnapping, and murdering others with relatively higher wealth (*Hankyoreh*, 22 July 2003).

The segregation and exclusion of these non-regular workers from decision-making and collective bargaining activities makes it more difficult for them to improve their employment conditions (Chung 2001). With respect to workers' trade union participation rate by gender in 2002, the ratio of women to men among the total labour unionists was 19.5 to 80.5 per cent. Furthermore, according to the

data shown in 1999 (NSO 2002), only 5.6 per cent of working women had a union membership. The significant reason for women's low union participation has been presented as women's over-representation in the non-regular workforce which was not qualified to join the enterprise-based unions. Another explanation is that a majority of female workers (more than 64 per cent of the total female workers) are occupied in firms with fewer than four employees. These small firms usually do not have their own labour unions. One female interviewee from *Cheonggyecheon* Apparel Labour Union during my fieldwork confirms the above explanations for women's low union representation. She said,

... many women workers in the apparel industry, especially the ones who work as home-based workers or are employed in micro or small-size contracted firms, have no enterprise union to join. Even though there are other industry-based or women-only unions like *Cheonggyecheon* union, a majority of women workers do not join any union because they often do not know they can be a member of those unions or because they think those unions on the whole exist for male workers.

Therefore, it is important to note that flexibility-driven employment adjustment in post 1997 Korea has deepened marginalisation of women's employment, largely shown as women's over-representation in non-regular types of employment and women's weak representation in trade unions.

7.3 Institutional and individual challenges to the gendered labour market in post 1997 Korea

The increase in firms' unfair employment practices against women in the course of post 1997 employment adjustment emerged as an important social concern because it resulted in a furthering of the marginalisation of women in employment. Various attempts have been made at both institutional and individual levels to stop firms' unfair employment practices against women and protect (potential) female workers suffering from those practices. In response to the view that the existing EEA was not appropriate to protect women in the workplaces, the Korean government amended the Act in 1999 and again in 2001 (Oh 2003). The 1999 amendment was to incorporate demands for the prohibition of indirect forms of sexual discrimination in employment and the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. The Act describes 'disciplinary actions against offenders (parties) and requires corporations to conduct employee training sessions on sexual harassment' (MOGE 2004). Additionally, the 2001 amendment of the Act was to introduce legislation in relation to protection of motherhood at work.

One of the reasons for the persistent employment discrimination by gender in Korea is the existence of employment practices that look gender-neutral ostensibly but are actually unfair to women. For instance, some firms use the experience of military service as an extra point for promotion and it obviously advantages men rather than women. In addition, providing training programs and business-related meetings after working hours or weekends discourages female workers, especially those who are married, from participating (Kang and Shin 2001:122-25). These unfair practices were seen as

factors causing indirect discrimination and this notion was finally introduced in EEA in 1999. The amended Act broadened the definition of discrimination as follows (MOLAB 2003).

In this Act, the term 'discrimination' refers to applying different conditions of employment or work to workers or taking any other disadvantageous measures against them without any rational reasons on account of gender, marriage, family condition, pregnancy, or childbirth. Although an employer applies the same hiring or working conditions to males and females, if the number of males and females who can meet the conditions is considerably less than that of the opposite gender and if this causes disadvantageous results to either gender, it shall constitute the discrimination.

The amended EEA has encouraged female workers and women's organisations' legal challenges to the unfair employment practices against women in the workplace, including not only direct but also indirect-discrimination practices. As discussed in chapter 6, each court case of *Nonghyeop* Bank and *Jeil* Insurance Company is an example showing female workers' legal challenges against firms' gender-biased dismissal policy in the process of post 1997 employment adjustment. Specifically, these two cases were against firms' forceful dismissal of married women with a husband working in the same workplace. The female workers who took the case to the court asked for the cancellation of their retirement, which was forcefully made after the management informed them that their husband would be disadvantaged in employment unless they left the workplace voluntarily.

However, in considering these two cases, the courts showed its gender-blindness or a passive attitude to gender discrimination in employment (Oh 2003). In treating the case of *Nonghyeop* the court gave a verdict in favour of the management based on the view that the female workers' retirement decision was made voluntarily, not forcefully. In the case of *Jeil Insurance Company*, the court gave a verdict in favour of the plaintiffs by recognising their retirement as a forceful decision pressured by the management, but it did not mention anything about the gender discriminatory element of the case. Despite the failure or limited success, the two cases are important to the extent that for the first time after 1997 they effectively captured public attention in relation to gender discrimination in employment. A number of similar cases were sent to the court for justice following those two cases. Nonetheless, many legal cases have remained unresolved or controversial. The main dilemma of indirect discrimination appears that the causes of discrimination are not necessarily intended to disadvantage particular employees. They often derive from ordinary employment arrangements, practices, and people's perceptions that seem gender-neutral or rational but result in disparate impacts or indirect discrimination. With indirect discrimination an employer can argue that there may be discrimination, but that it is actually required for the job (Chung 2002:78-9; Kang and Shin 2001:125; Shin 2002:60-2).

For instance, in the case caused by the policy forcing one's dismissal, either husband or wife, among married couples working in the same firm, if the firm forced wives to resign, this would be seen as a direct discrimination case against EEA. However, firms directed the policy towards married couples without any gender-related actions or remarks. Without any apparent force, wives were more likely to give

up their jobs for the sake of their husbands, and wives' sacrifice for husbands was taken for granted in the society. In addition, the fact that wives' wage levels were lower than those for their husbands and that they had fewer future job prospects also affected the couples' decision. In this regard, although the policy 'only one family member in the workplace' may look gender-neutral, it caused indirect gender discrimination against women in practice (Shin 2003:60).

Furthermore, the amended EEA has not yet been effective in prohibiting gender discrimination in employment. The four major reasons for the ineffectiveness of the Act are: 1) a passive operation by the fair employment practice agencies that are in charge of discrimination and the protection of the employment rights of women; 2) a too weak punishment for the law-breakers; 3) an ineffective dispute resolution system inside the work organisations; and 4) a lack of the individuals' understanding of the Act¹³⁴ (McKinsey 2001:143-49). These factors explain the low level of legal challenges to unfair employment practices in the Korean labour market by women.

Another significant challenge to unfair employment practices in post 1997 Korea is the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) in 2001. MOGE is a central administrative body that plans, coordinates and executes gender politics in Korea (MOGE 2003). In cooperation with various women's organisations, including labour unions, the Ministry has made a contribution to improving women's equal rights in employment. The reform of the Equal Employment Act in 2001 is one of the outcomes of the collaborated efforts of women-centred organisations. They are currently leading the ongoing 'anti-hojuje movement'. Despite the strong resistance from

Confucian scholars and traditionalists, the aim of the movement is to get the family registry system abolished by the end of 2004.

The third and last challenge has been made by women's organisations including domestic NGOs and trade unions. Notably, the legal cases that have been made in relation to unfair employment arrangements, including *Nonghyeop* and *Jeil* Life Insurance cases are primarily supported by women's organizations. In particular, women's poor labour union representation and their marginal status in male and female-combined unions were increasingly recognised as the important reasons for unfair employment practices by gender during the crisis-affected period. The struggles of HMC female cafeteria workers showed the effectiveness of a female-only union in protecting women's employment in the male-dominated workplace. Therefore, amongst women there have been many efforts made in terms of encouraging women to join the unions and to increase their representation power in the unions. In particular, significant members of women-only unions by sector, region, and industry have been created following the crisis period. The main objectives of these unions are to secure equal employment rights, abolish gender-differentiated employment practices and perceptions, and establish employment protection for working mothers (KWTU 2003; KWWAU 2003; SWTU 2003).

The major nationwide women-only unions in Korea are Korean Women Workers Associations United (KWWAU) and Korean Women's Trade Union (KWTU). KWWAU was first established in 1992 but certified by the Ministry of Labour in 1995. Its previous body was Women Workers' Associations in Seoul as the starting point in March of 1987 and later on regional women workers'

associations were formed in export concentrated sectors, industrial complexes and low income areas across the nation. In the post 1997 period, KWWAU set up Action Centre for Women's Unemployment with the aim of making women's unemployment a social issue and carried out a series of campaigns to pressure the government to set up measures for women workers to overcome unemployment (Womenlink 2004). KWTU was established in 1999, mainly aiming to support female workers with non-regular employment status and those in micro and small-size firms. Both KWWAU and KWTU have several regional branches across the country (KWWAU 2004).

On the other hand, there is an independent Seoul regional women-only union, called Seoul Women's Trade Union (SWTU). SWTU was established in 1999 but finally certified as a legalised trade union by the Supreme Court of Korea in February 2004. Unlike other trade unions in Korea, SWTU has insisted on embracing unemployed female workers in its membership, considering the instability of Korean women's employment. In her presentation at 'Unions in Korea Workshop'¹³⁵ in 2004, Hye-Seon Kim, the president of Seoul Women's Trade Union (SWTU) claimed,

SWTU is making efforts to organise underemployed women whose labour rights are refused by the laws and practices, and whose rights to union are also refused by the majority of the existing trade unions. There is a very thin line between underemployed and unemployed women workers because underemployed workers are very vulnerable to unemployment. For instance, the one who is employed today on the daily basis can be unemployed tomorrow if there is no job demand for her. Hence, many women workers repeatedly

become underemployed and unemployed. As a result, we in the SWTU, are convinced that the strict distinction between employed and unemployed is nonsense especially in understanding women's working life.

However, their extension of membership to unemployed workers made it difficult for SWTU to gain recognition as a legal trade union from the city government of Seoul. Consequently, it had remained a non-registered union for the past six years (Cheong and Kim 2004). SWTU's legal battle carries great significance for the Korean labour movement because the unemployed workers have the right to organise hereafter (SWTU 2004).

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that gender discrimination through exclusion of women from more prestigious, better paid jobs prevails in Korean society. As a consequence, Korean women as a whole persistently remain as an inferior workforce. This implies that Korean women can not avoid repeatedly acting as a reserve army of labour in response to changes in economic conditions or substituting women themselves with a more flexible lower wage form of employment contract unless the fundamental obstacles to gender equality are removed. Korean female workers as a whole are disadvantaged not because of the differences in human capital between men and women but because of the existing gendered employment structure in the labour market. The major obstacles that I have focused on in this thesis are gender bias in labour policies and patriarchal gender hierarchy in Korean society. Women's disadvantaged status would not improve without

the promotion of gender equality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources. In this regard, this thesis has provided an important analysis of Korean social and economic structure shaping the lives of men and women, such as gender division of labour and gender inequality in the sharing of power and decision-making in employment.

This thesis has also examined how Korean women workers themselves negotiated employment changes in their workplace and how the society analysed women's experiences in the post1997 labour market. Not many studies have looked into these issues based on fieldwork. This thesis provides a significant empirical analysis complementing the literature on the impact of the neo-liberal employment adjustment in crisis-affected countries. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated some important major labour market concerns in contemporary Korea. They include the increase in non-regular workforce, resulting in the rising number of people in poverty, and the deepening of the marginalisation of women's employment, largely shown as women's over representation in non-regular types of employment and women's weak representation in trade unions.

Note

¹³² According to the OECD standard, people who are waged under two-thirds of the average regular workers' income are included in the low-income class group.

¹³³ The term 'people of the new poverty' was first publicly used by Ryo Jeong-Soon, the president of the Korean Institute of Poverty Issues (KIPI), at the two-year anniversary conference of KIPI in 22 July, 2003. In her talk, she also emphasised

that income inequality in the Korean society has worsened since the 1997 crisis by comparing Korea's Gini index of 0.283 in 1997 and 0.319 in 2001. A Gini reading closer to 1 indicates a higher degree of income inequality (*Hankyoreh*, 22 July 2003).

¹³⁴ Fair employment practice agencies are in charge of discrimination and the protection of the employment rights of women by investigating alleged cases of discrimination to rectify discriminatory practices. They include the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Gender Equality, and the Equal Employment Commission. However, these institutions lack the authority to punish law-breakers, and, as a result, they often finalise some discriminatory cases by giving warnings to law-breakers. Connected to the second reason, the punishment given to the law-breakers (mostly employers) is too light, a small fine or warnings. With respect to the third reason, the Act encourages companies to have an equal employment commission of their own and to try to resolve the discriminatory cases before sending them to external agencies or commissions. In many cases, these firm-based commissions are operated by employers and thus play a passive role in resolving the problems, being in less favour of female workers. Finally, the Act is not well publicised to the employers and workers. According to the GOEM's 2000 survey for the degree of workers' knowledge of the Act, slightly more than a half of female respondents recognised it and this is smaller than the 71 per cent of male respondents (McKinsey 2001:143-49).

¹³⁵ 'Unions in Korea Workshop' was held by the Griffith Asia Pacific Research Institute of the Griffith University on 3 February 2004 in Brisbane. I participated in the workshop as a guest speaker and also an interpreter of Hye-Seon Kim.

in given names are separated by hyphen. (for example, Park Jung-Hee)

2. There exist inconsistencies of romanisation among personal names, especially among the authors of the materials used in this thesis. If the authors have their own way of romanising their names, this thesis follows it. Otherwise, the revised romanisation is used.

Examples:

- 최 is romanised as Choi or Choe.
- 정 is romanised as Chung, Cheong, and Jung.

3. Personal names that have two family names are followed by space without hyphen. (for example, Cho Han Hye-Jung: 조한혜정, Chang Yoon Pil-Wha 장윤필화)
4. The first letter of administrative units such as 도 and 시 follows the old romanisation of Korean. (for instance, Pusan, Kwang-ju, Kyeong-gi province)

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