Living Cohabitation in the Republic of Korea: The Reported Experiences of Lesbians, Gays and Heterosexuals

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Abstract

In contemporary western culture, cohabitation is not a major issue – it has become a normal practice in everyday life. This is not at all the case in Korea where the institution of marriage is still considered the pivotal relation that authorises 'adult citizenship' (Josephson 2005: 272). Non-marital cohabitation is therefore something of a taboo. At the same time, homosexuality, though neither legal nor illegal, is also taboo and hence same-sex couples' cohabitation has hardly been discussed in Korean academe because first, it is expected to be hidden and, second, given that homosexuality is not generally accepted in Korean culture, the issue of same-sex couples' cohabitation is constructed as outside of public interest.

Hence, overall, little attention has been paid to the question of how Korean cohabiting couples live their cohabitation and what the similarities/differences in experience might be among same-sex and different-sex couples. This thesis centres on couples' reported experiences of living cohabitation, that is the dailiness of their lives together and its meaning as they articulate it in terms of particular practices. I draw on interviews carried out between April and September 2012 with twelve heterosexuals, nine gays and fourteen lesbians, all of whom were cohabiting. In my research I focus on: 1) how and why couples come to consider cohabiting and decide to do so; 2) the extent to which couples disclose the nature of their cohabitation to others (i.e. mothers, fathers, siblings, friends, work colleagues and neighbours), which remains a big issue in Korea; 3) the ways in which cohabitation is discussed by my participants as emulating and/or rejecting traditional Korean family norms. I argue that cohabiting couples do cohabitation differently, in line with their sexual identity.

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Author's Declaration

I certify that all the research and writing presented in this thesis are original and my own. Over the course of PhD I have used parts of my research in papers given at academic conferences.

A version of Chapter 5, 'Living Cohabitation', has been used at the 'Gender, Equality and Intimacy: (Un)comfortable Bedfellows?' conference at the Institute of Education in London, under the title 'Living Cohabitation in Contemporary Korea: Experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Heterosexual Couples', 7 April 2014.

A version of Chapter 4, 'Disclosing Cohabitation', has been given at the BSA annual conference at Leeds University, under the title 'Disclosure of Cohabitation to Others in South Korea: Experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Heterosexual Couples', 25 April 2014.

CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Introduction

This thesis deals with the matter of cohabitation in Korea. To be more specific, my thesis is concerned with exploring the lives of contemporary Korean cohabiting couples whose voices are mostly muted and whose experiences remain hardly researched and hidden in Korea. In the Korean context where the patriarchal family based on heteronormative marriage is dominant,[1] cohabitation is still considered problematic, and therefore cohabiting couples are marginalised.[2] This might sound bizarre in the context of the United States and northwest European countries such as Sweden, Denmark, France and the United Kingdom where cohabitation has become a common practice (see Lappegård 2014; Manning and Brown 2014). For example, in their 2011 General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics (ONS 2013) reports that about 50% of women and men aged 25 to 34 are currently cohabiting in Britain. In 2011 over 80% of British marrieds aged 25 to 74 had been in a premarital cohabitation. Moreover, ONS (2014) reports that the number of cohabiting couple families is estimated at nearly 3.0 millions for heterosexuals and about 84,000 for homosexuals in the UK in 2014. Together, cohabiting couple families account for 16.4% of all families in the UK. The number of different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couple families has doubled and quintupled respectively from 1996. However, even western countries did not accept cohabitation in the fairly recent past. Cohabitation was often referred to as 'living in sin' (Frost 2008) until a few decades ago and female cohabiters in particular were stigmatised if they lived with a man without being married (Macklin 1980). Today, this has changed. Cohabitation is not a taboo anymore in western countries, and is in fact often preferred to marriage. Some people even wonder why one should register one's marriage when they want to live with their intimate partner because 'a piece of paper' will be all they receive (Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin 2011). In other words, people frequently think that there is little benefit in being married.

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[1] According to the Social Survey conducted by KOSIS (2014a), Korean adults of marriageable age (20 to 49) appeared to have normative attitudes to marriage, with about 13.2% of them saying 'one must get married' and about 42% 'one would be better off getting married'. Their parents' generation has a more favourable attitude towards marriage. Over 70% of respondents in their 50s and over 80% of those in their 60s approved of the idea of getting married.

[2] There are still no statistics on the number of cohabiting couples in Korea.

However, the 'piece of paper' is very important in Korea in many ways. For example, bank loans with a low interest rate for example are only available to married couples, not cohabiting ones. Also, married couples (preferably with children) are in a favourable position when applying for a rental apartment. Additionally, there are many policies to support married couples and discriminate against unmarried people. In fact, without the piece of paper, an adult Korean may not achieve 'adult citizenship' (Josephson 2005: 272). Therefore, those who are unmarried and live together are in various ways excluded in Korean society.

As well as cohabiting heterosexuals, lesbians and gays who are not able to marry legally in Korea, are also marginalised. This is reflected in the fact that there are no single official statistics on cohabitation in Korea (Seo Jimyoung 2012).[3] Nevertheless, the numbers of Korean cohabiting couples whether they are heterosexual or homosexual are 'estimated' to increase in Korea, based on the international survey on the youth values in 2010 and in 2012 conducted by Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. This shows the growing acceptance of premarital cohabitation and homosexuality, although the degree of acceptance is still low compared to neighbouring countries such as China and Japan (see Choi Injae et al. 2011; Lim Heejin et al. 2012). In popular culture terms, it is not very difficult to find Korean television programmes dealing with cohabiting couples.[4] It is also not very difficult to find people criticising cohabiting couples on the internet.[5] My research is located in the gap between the increasing trend of the phenomenon of cohabitation and the negative social attitudes that attend it. In this, I replicate in the Korean context research that was more common in western countries in the 1970s but that has become unusual in 2015 when cohabitation is widely accepted in the west.

My project looks at different-sex cohabiting couples and same-sex ones, and at both partners where possible. Thus, heterosexual women and men, and homosexual

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[3] To cite Korean authors' names in this thesis, I indicate full names in the order of last name first, followed by the first name. This is to avoid confusion because there are not many different Korean last names.
[4] For example, *Abnormal Discussion* (*비정상회담*) was broadcast on JTBC on 14 July 2014 and *Better with Child* (*유자식 상팔자*) was broadcast on JTBC on 3 December 2013.
[5] For example, see an article on young people's cohabitation experiences and comments posted on Naver (Hwang Soohyun et al. 2014c).

women and men are involved in this study. This kind of comparative study of cohabiting couples has not been done before in the Korean context, and thus constitutes an original contribution to knowledge in the realm of family and of women's studies. My key research questions are: 1) why and in what circumstance do people choose to cohabit?; 2) what are the disclosure patterns among cohabiters to their significant others (i.e. parents, siblings, friends, work colleagues and neighbours) and what motivates these?; 3) how do cohabiters view and live their cohabitation? To set the scene before exploring these research questions, I shall begin by discussing why I chose to research this subject, and then I shall consider the Korean context. I shall then provide a literature review on Korean writings on cohabitation. At the end of this chapter, I will set out the thesis structure.

1-1.   Motivations for This Research

One reason why I chose this subject lies in the current situation of the existing literature on cohabiting couples in Korea. There is very little research dealing with such couples in Korea. What is more, most of it focuses on young, heterosexual and female cohabiters, mostly university students (see Park Eunjoo 2002; Kim Jeongsook 2003; Kim Jiyoung 2005; Kim Mihyun 2009; Yang Soojin 2012; Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010). This means that cohabiters who are beyond university age, non-heterosexual or male have not been investigated in Korean academe.

I also have a personal reason for embarking on this project. My initial focus for my PhD thesis was meant to be cohabiting lesbian couples, a topic I had already wanted to deal with in my MA thesis. But as a Korean woman who had lived almost thirty years in Korea before coming to England to study, I was well, perhaps too well, aware of the situation in Korea where one can be seriously stigmatised and excluded in society if one is revealed as gay (Seo Dongjin 2001). I was very concerned about this homophobic stance and decided to research something else for my MA. Then, when I decided to continue to do a PhD, I went back to the idea of researching Korean lesbian cohabiting couples. Although the decision was made after careful and long consideration, I was still not quite certain how I would carry out the research and worried if my lesbian identity would become apparent to any readers of my thesis. Thus, as well as the academic rationale to investigate both same-sex and

different-sex couples, I also had a personal reason to conduct this research, though my initial intention was to blur and hopefully disguise my sexual identity in my research. But, in spite of that initial intention, I struggled with conducting my fieldwork and writing each thesis chapter in this disguise and eventually decided not to hide, but rather to situate myself in this research more actively.

One of the important motivations that gave me courage to become honest in conducting this research and not to conceal my sexual identity arose from reading a chapter by Evelyn Blackwood (1995), recommended by my supervisor. In her work, Blackwood, a lesbian anthropologist doing her fieldwork in Indonesia where homosexuality is not acceptable, delicately describes how she positioned herself as a researcher. The complex story of a researcher whose lesbian identity was intentionally concealed in her fieldwork made me realize that the struggle I had as a lesbian researcher was not very unusual and could be discussed in a field such as Women's Studies where the researcher's positionality and reflexivity play an important role in fieldwork and research as a whole (see Miller 1991; Ryan-Flood and Gill 2013). This will be discussed in more detail in the Methodology chapter. Both this recognition and the lack of work on cohabitation in Korea therefore motivated my research. I shall now move on to set the scene to show how cohabitation has been shaped in the Korean context in terms of historical and social changes.

1-2.   The Korean Context

In this section, I shall briefly consider the changes in Korean society from its (heteronormative) familialism to a defamilialising society. I shall firstly focus on how cohabitation has been shaped and how it is generally perceived to outline the gap between public attitudes and academic views. Secondly, I shall discuss the gendered sexual double standard that prevails, revealing how women and men are understood in general and treated differently. I shall then look at the patriarchal Korean marriage and family system that keeps excluding and marginalising women. Lastly, I shall touch on how same-sex couples' living together has been dealt with in Korea, drawing upon two cases of lesbian and gay couples.

Through the rise of modernisation and individualisation, cohabitation has become increasingly popular in Korea as a form of 'transformation of intimacy' (Giddens 1992), especially since the 1990s (see Ham Inhee 2002). By 'cohabitation' in this thesis, I mean those who have not been married before and are living with their intimate partner. Such relationships are usually called '혼전동거' or 'premarital cohabitation' in Korea, rather than just 'cohabitation' because marriage is still the normative relation that must be achieved to attain 'adult citizenship' (see Josephson 2005). There are several kinds of cohabitation in Korea, such as 'remarriage cohabitation'[6] and 'elderly marriage cohabitation'[7] as well as 'premarital cohabitation'.[8] These relations may be a common-law marriage relation or not, depending on the cohabiters' intentions regarding their relationships. Park Kyoungjae (2013) argues that those who are in a cohabiting relationship without a plan to marry but rather want to remain cohabiting, need to be understood as being in a 'voluntarily de facto marriage' (see also Kim Hyesook 1989). This should be distinguished from the traditional common-law marriage.[9] In this context, I would like to state that my focus in this research is on heterosexual cohabitation as a voluntary relation, although lesbian and gay couples' cohabitation needs to be understood differently, given that legal marriage and common-law marriage for same-sex couples do not exist in Korea.

Historically, it was in the 1950s that cohabitation was first discussed as common-law marriage or premarital cohabitation in Korea, according to the 2008 report (see Kwak Baehee 2008) of the Korea Legal Aid Centre for Family Relations (KLACfFR). There might have been cohabitation before the 1950s, but I focus on the period after 1953, partly because this is when Civil Law was established after the last war in Korean history (Korean War, 1950-1953) and also partly because of the related limitations of searching for literature. Hence, literature of the Japanese colonial

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[6] This might sound vague because of the combination of these two incompatible words, re-'marriage' and cohabitation. It indicates divorcees' cohabitation in Korea.
[7] Elderly marriage cohabitation points to old people cohabiting, usually over 60.
[8] In general, the term premarital cohabitation involves young (of marriageable age, around 20 to 40) couples' cohabitation.
[9] Traditional common-law marriage points to those who want to marry, but cannot do so. Hence, they have to form a common-law marriage relation. The reasons vary, for example parents' refusal or having the same family names with the same regional roots of two partners (see Park Kyoungjae 2013).

period (1910-1945), Chosun (1392-1910), Koryo (918-1392) and other earlier periods is excluded in this study.

The 2008 report of the KLACfFR revealed that the number of clients who came with common-law marriage problems peaked in the 1950s to the 1960s. The report suggests that this was because people were confused about the need for the legal registration of their marriage that was newly enacted in 1953. The cohabitation issue again distinctly featured in the 1970s, in the industrial period in Korea. Female factory workers, called Gongsuni,[10] who cohabited with another (male) factory worker, were negatively described as sexually promiscuous (Kim Won 2005). As the number of female students who entered university grew, university students' cohabitation became visible, particularly during the 1980s (Dongailbo 1978), becoming more prevalent in the 1990s (Ham Inhee 2002). Moving into the twenty-first century, cohabitation became a social phenomenon, not only considered as a de facto marriage or university students' temporary relation, but also as a long-term committed relationship. To reflect this social trend, there were a number of novels, soap operas, plays and even films on this topic in the early 2000s,[11] although most of them did not involve a direct discussion of sexual relations, but only of romantic love (Yoo Aesoon 2004).

Yet, cohabitation is still a taboo in Korea. In a recent survey (Panelnow 2014) that asked about unmarried men's and women's premarital cohabitation, about 70% of the participants appeared to be concerned about cohabiting before marriage because of the negative social attitudes towards cohabitation (27.66%), the difficulties when cohabitation breaks down before marriage (12.76%), the emphasis on sexual pleasure in cohabitation (10.98%), the social stigma for women when they become pregnant while cohabiting (9.82%) and because cohabitation seems less committed than marriage (8.63%). This survey shows that many young people care about how they

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[10] Gosuni (공순이) is a humiliating nickname for female factory workers that connotes the uneducated, poor and sexually promiscuous (Kim Won 2005).
[11] One of the most famous works on cohabiting couples is *Cat on the Rooftop*, which was originally a form of internet novel written by Kim Yuri based on her true story and broadcast on MBC as a soap opera in 2003. It was also published in book format in 2001, 2003 and 2010. Due to its sensational popularity, it was adapted as a play and has been continuously performed since 2010. Other works dealing with the subject of 'cohabitation' include *Wanee and Junha* (film, 2001), *Singles* (film, 2003), *Condition of Love* (soap opera, 2004) and *Coffee Prince* (soap opera, 2007).

are seen by others once they start cohabiting (before marriage) and when it is revealed. The greatest worry was the negative social attitudes towards cohabitation (27.66% of the participants). Why are these attitudes so negative? A recent news article and its online responses may provide a reason for this. An article by Hwang Soohyun et al. (2014b) in Hangukilbo on *Young People's Premarital Cohabitation*, reported on interviews with ten unmarried young people (aged 20s to 30s) who had experiences of cohabiting. A female interviewee talked about the social stigma of cohabiting women experience and a male participant said that his five years of cohabitation ended because his cohabitee married someone else. Both of them seemed to regret that they had cohabited, not married. The article was posted on Daum (one of the biggest portal sites in Korea; see Hwang Soohyun et al. 2014c) and an overwhelming number of netizens who read the article showed a very critical attitude towards cohabiting women, describing them as sluts, prostitutes or whores. This clearly suggests that a sexual double standard regarding women and men still exists in Korea and this gendered sexual standard contributes to the negative attitudes regarding cohabitation, particularly for women.

1-2-1. The Sexual Double Standard

In fact, discriminatory gendered sexual norms have always been a key factor in seeing women as weak, vulnerable and passive relative to men in Korea (Won Mihye 2011). Men with sexual experiences are regarded as healthy, active and masculine. In contrast, women in the same position are described as 'sperm-pans', meaning a dustpan that receives sperm. This is because women's virginity is considered important (Hong Jia 2009). The myth of the importance of the hymen is still strongly embedded in Korean society. A National Korean data also support the gendered attitude to the importance of premarital virginity (see Lee Jongwon et al. 2012). In that survey, a significant gendered gap was revealed in attitudes: women were expected to remain virgins until marriage (according to about 48.6% of the participants) whereas men's virginity was not an issue (according to about 60% of the participants). This gendered attitude to keeping one's virginity before marriage controls female bodies and that strengthens the subordinate position of women in Korea.

In the light of this sexual double standard, cohabitation tends to be considered as a decision for sexual freedom and this particularly stigmatises (heterosexual) women because they are assumed to have sexual relations with their male cohabitee (Park Eunjoo 2002). This means that they have lost their virginity and are thus classed as loose women. What is problematic here as already indicated is that the same sexual judgement is not applied to men, but only to women (Won Mihye 2011).

Overall, there is a discrepancy between the actuality that cohabitation has become popular and the negative social views of cohabitation. This contradiction is revealed in a number of other surveys and statistics. For example, in 2013 the Korean Institution for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA) showed that 46.1% of its survey respondents said that cohabitation without marriage was acceptable (see Kim Seungkwon et al. 2013). Also, KOSIS (2014a) reports that approximately 62.1% of Korean adults aged 20 to 39 were in favour of premarital cohabitation. However, another survey shows that 61.22 % of 7,786 respondents were concerned about negative attitudes towards cohabitation, and particularly 9.82% of them said that the stigma for cohabiting women was too serious to be overcome (Panelnow 2014). These surveys and statistics indicate that whilst young people desire cohabitation, a significant proportion is afraid, or at least aware, of the stigma attached to it.

Despite these negative attitudes to cohabitation, the numbers of people living with their girl/boyfriend without being married are growing. Ham Inhee (2002) and many others point out that one of the key reasons for the growing number of (young) cohabiters is the patriarchal structure of the marriage and family in Korea.

1-2-2. Patriarchal Marriage and Family Structure
Korean marriage customs and the family structure are patriarchal and many scholars point out that Confucianism is the basis for this (Chang Pilhwa 1997; Yang Hyunah 1998; Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung 2010; Shim Younghee 2011). Korea is one of the most patriarchal Confucian countries in East Asia, along with Taiwan, China and Japan (Chen and Li 2014). Confucianism became the national ruling ideology during the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1897). It became the *Hojuje* in combination with the Japanese *Ie* family system in the colonial period in 1921 (Yang Hyunah 1999). Hojuje is the law that documents family members' birth, marriage

and death, belonging to a male head. It was abolished in 2005 in Korea because it legally guaranteed the hierarchical relation between a male head (usually, one's father, husband, brother or even son) and the other family members. Although Hojuje was abolished about a decade ago, the patriarchal and patrilineal family system is still embedded in Korea. It is also important to note that the marriage tradition and process still locate a woman (wife) and her natal family under her husband and husband's family. The marriage and family system are inextricably intertwined because one's own family is generally believed to be formed through marriage. Hence marriage in Korea is two families' union, rather than two individuals' union (Choi Jeonghye and Goo Myoungsook 2010). This is evident in the expressions used to describe marriage: *Sizipgada* (meaning, going to the husband's family) for women and *Janggagada* (meaning, going to the wife's family) for men and these expressions are more generally used in Korea rather than 'marrying'.

In the family-centred marriage tradition, a woman is structurally excluded and marginalised. Traditionally, a married woman is considered to be sent to her husband's family from her natal family. She is expected to become a member of her husband's family and her natal family is not hers anymore after marriage. In contrast, a married man becomes the head of his family and is expected to look after his parents and his patrilineal ancestors by living with them and by holding memorial services. This is also the responsibility of the married man's wife because she belongs to her husband's family once married. Here, the problematic relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law arises. As the matter of caring for family members is considered women's role, the relation between the two women is often troubled. When a married woman has difficulties dealing with her husband's family, especially with her mother-in-law, it is described as the woman having *시집살이* or *Sizipsari*. This Sizipsari problem stresses most Korean women even before marriage and this is one of the reasons why women are reluctant to marry nowadays (Choi Jeonghye and Goo Myoungsook 2010).

The patri-lineal/archal marriage, family and kinship systems emerged from Confucianism in the Chosun era, particularly in the last stage of the era, and this, the so-called *Korean tradition*, has been dominant in contemporary Korea (Lee Namhee 2011). Many scholars argue that this patriarchal structure encourages divorce and

discourages marriage in the younger generation, especially among women, due to the increase of women's participation in the labour market and consequently their greater financial independence (Baek Jina 2009; Chang Kyungsup 2010; Shim Younghee 2011). Furthermore, Kim Youngchul (2011) reports on 'Measures against the Increasing Unmarried Rates and Low Fertility' and suggests that the acceptance of cohabitation in terms of social policy and social attitudes could be a measure to solve the increasing rates of unmarried people and the decreasing fertility rates. As Kim Youngchul (2011) and many others point out, divorce, single households and cohabitation have gradually increased and marriage and fertility rates have decreased, indicating certain changes in Korean society. This is discussed in the following section.

1-2-3. Marriage and Divorce

Although heterosexual cohabitation seems increasingly prevalent, at least among the younger generation, cohabitation is still perceived as an unusual relationship due to the fact that it is not marriage. In Korea, institutional marriage is still the most dominant couple relation and the marriage rate is higher than the average among the OECD countries. According to OECD (2014a), the 2012 marriage rate in Korea was 55.8% whilst the average rate is 52.4%. The rate is the ninth highest among the 41 OECD countries. Yet, the marriage rate has dramatically decreased in Korea. KOSIS (2013a) reports that the number of married people per 1,000 of eligible population was 6.4 in 2013 whereas it was 9.3 in 1990 (see Figure 1). This is a marked decrease.
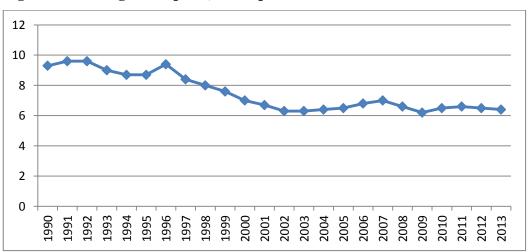
Figure 1. Marriage Rate per 1,000 Population in Korea from 1990 to 2013

Source: Demographic Survey 2013 (KOSIS 2013a).

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In the OECD (2014b) report, moreover, the fertility rate in Korea was the lowest among the OECD countries at 1.24. The number of adult single households that had never been married reached nearly four out of ten, which indicates that about 25% of total households in Korea.

The age of marriage has also steadily risen (see Figure 2), from 24.78 for women and 27.79 for men in 1990 to 29.59 and 32.21 respectively in 2013 (KOSIS 2013b).
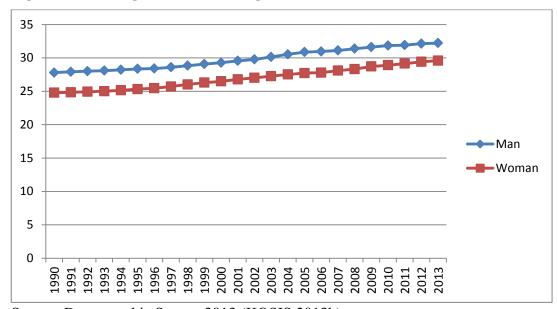
Figure 2. Mean Age at First Marriage in Korea from 1990 to 2013

Source: Demographic Survey 2013 (KOSIS 2013b).

Some people claim that these changes are caused by the trend among young couples to cohabit. They also insist that cohabitation encourages the divorce rate. However, this is groundless assertion. In fact, as Figure 3 shows below, divorce rates soared until 2003[12] and then gradually decreased and stabilised. To put it differently, if there is a correlation between cohabitation and divorce rates, it may mean that cohabitation reduces the divorce rates.

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[12] According to KOSIS report on Marriage and Divorce Statistics (2011), the divorce rate dramatically increased after the IMF shock in 1997 and peaked in 2003, a year after the credit crash in Korea in 2002.
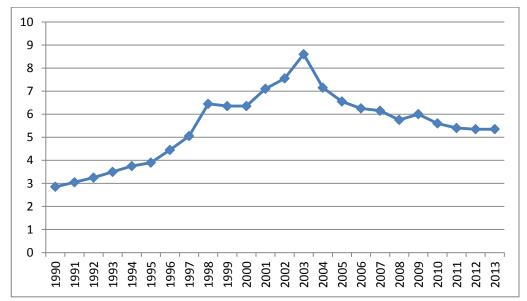
Figure 3. Divorce Rate per 1,000 Population from 1990 to 2013

Source: Demographic Survey 2013 (KOSIS 2013c).

Although the divorce rate has declined and stabilised in the last decade, the divorce rate in 2013 had almost doubled compared to 1990.

As for the attitude to marriage, men appear to want to marry more than women according to the national report (KOSIS 2014a), with about 61.5% men and 52.3% women being in favour of getting married. This gender gap may be because of the patriarchal structure of the Korean family system, as Park Yongjoo (2014) reports. He argues that men can get a 'premium on marriage' whereas women may receive a 'penalty on marriage' because men turn out to concentrate more on their work and thus earn more after marriage thanks to their wife's support, given that married women are required to do the housework and childcare. Consequently, women are more reluctant to marry than men.

So far, I have considered how heterosexual cohabitation has been discussed in Korea, focusing on the sexual double standard, and on the patriarchal marriage and family structure, followed by the very slowly changing Korean society in terms of the attitudes to marriage and divorce. Now, I turn to discuss lesbian and gay couples' cohabitation.

1-2-4. Cohabitation among Same-Sex Couples

Cohabitation of same-sex couples has not been much discussed in Korean academe. It received some attention in Korea when a lesbian woman brought a law suit against her partner in 2003 (Jeong Duksang 2003) for breaking their common-law marriage relationship by violence and threats, demanding financial compensation and the division of their joint property. However, the court turned down the case because in their view a relation between same-sex partners cannot be understood as a common-law marriage as it would be for a heterosexual couple under Korean social norms,[13] although their relationship had lasted over twenty years and continued *akin to* a common-law marriage relationship.

The issue of same-sex couples also came into the spotlight in Korea in September 2013 when the famous gay film director Kim-Jo Gwangsoo and his partner held their wedding ceremony in public and in May 2014 when they sued the head of the Seodaemun-Gu Office for the rejection of their marriage registration. Their attorneys argued that:

> The rejection made by the head of the Seodaemun-Gu Office of the marriage registration of Kim-Jo Gwangsoo and his partner violates the civil law provisions in misinterpretation and there is no mention in law to prohibit marriage between same-sex partners that have an obvious intention to marry with proof by having a wedding ceremony. According to Sub-Article 1, Article 36 of the Constitution[14] that provides freedom of marriage and equality, same-sex marriage must be accepted in the constitutional way of interpretation. Sub-Article 1, Article 36 of the Constitution literally means that a man and a woman should be equal within a marriage and family living, not that marriage necessitates a man and a woman (Shin Yoori 2014).

Although attitudes in Korea have been changing around the idea of diverse families, cohabitation – whether between different-sex or same-sex couples – is still

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[13] See the judicial precedent judged by Lee Sangin, the presiding judge, Kim Byungchan and Choi Seungwon (2004).

[14] Sub-Article 1, Article 36 of the Constitution states that 'marriage and family living is based on individual dignity and both sexes' equality and it is secured by the nation'.

problematized unlike in contemporary western culture where cohabitation has become a normal practice in everyday life (see Lee Yeonjoo 2008; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014). Although same-sex couples' cohabitation has hardly been discussed in Korean academe, there are some studies that deal with the legal right to same-sex marriage (see Kim Byoungrok 2009; Research Group for the Right to Found a Family 2011). This suggests that in research the issue of lesbian and gay couples has been politically shaped first, centring on the matter of marriage rights, rather than their actual lifestyle choices and experiences, while their personal stories still remain marginalised.

Given this situation, the rest of my thesis will fill that gap by dealing with same-sex as well as different-sex cohabiting couples in Korea, drawing on original empirical materials in the form of semi-structured interviews (see Methodology chapter for further details). Before these, I shall now outline the key debates in research on heterosexual and homosexual cohabiting couples which underpin my own project, followed by the outline of my thesis.

1-3.   Literature Review

In the early stage of this PhD journey I had a somewhat vague idea about cohabiting couples in Korea in terms of what and how to investigate, and why I was interested in studying this. Doing the literature review on cohabiting couples in Korea and in other countries (mainly north and west European countries and the US) greatly helped me to become aware of what, how and why to explore Korean cohabiting couples. The main purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to identify how cohabitation has been researched and analysed in Korea and to engage with the existing western literature where cohabitation has become normalised through a half century (Kroeger and Smock 2014).

I shall begin by considering how prevalent cohabitation is in Korea, dealing with existing studies on Korean cohabiting couples who are mostly, marginalised and excluded in this heteronormative and family-centred society. I will then discuss western views on cohabitation, particularly looking at relevant theories such as individualisation and transformation of intimacy (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1992) which are considered the main social factors triggering the radical

increase in cohabitation in Korea as well as in the west. Next, I shall discuss the ways in which western social changes have influenced Korean society. Finally, gaps in the current research will be addressed.

1-3-1. The Invisibility of Cohabiting Couples in Korea

There are no official statistics on cohabiting couples in Korea at present (2015). OECD data from Society at a Glance 2011 may be the only data indicating the percentage of cohabiting persons in Korea. It reports 0% alongside the same figure for Japan, Greece, Israel, Turkey, India and Indonesia. Although some recently argue that the population of cohabitants might be hidden in the number of those who never married and are currently single (reported at 40% of the adult population), it is still difficult to estimate the number of cohabitants in Korea (see Park Sooji 2014).

This is not the case in some of western countries at least, although many western countries did not investigate the demographics of cohabiting couples until the late 1990s (see Murphy 2000; Manning and Brown 2014). For example in the United States, the demographic investigation of unmarried partners began in 1996 and it was estimated at 2.9 million in 1996 and the recent survey estimates it at 7.9 million in 2014 (see U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Moreover, cohabitation has become a popular way to have a first union. In their report based on the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), Copen, Daniels and Mosher (2013) revealed that nearly half of American women aged 15 to 44 (48%) cohabited as their first union. This percentage is double that of women who married in their first union (23%). Child births within cohabitation households are also on the increase from 6% in the 1980s to nearly 60% in the late 2010s (Lichter 2012). What is more, serial cohabitation is found to be rising gradually (Lichter, Turner and Sassler 2010).

The prevalence of cohabitation is also observed in European countries. Sanchez-Gassen and Perelli-Harris (2014) conducted a comparative study on cohabitation in twelve European countries. Their report showed that cohabitation has become a normal practice at least in the European countries (see Figure 4).
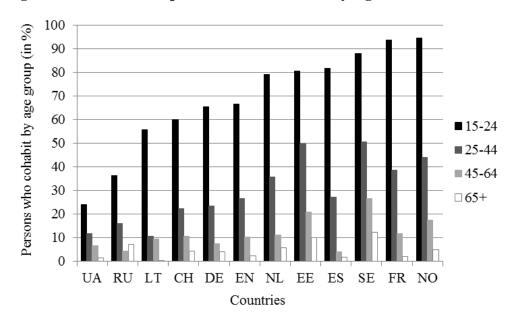
Figure 4. Partnered Respondents Who Cohabit by Age

Source: European Social Survey 2010 (cited in Sanchez-Gassen and Perelli-Harris 2014: 9).

Note: In France and the Netherlands, data on cohabitation include registered partnerships. Country abbreviations: UA (Ukraine), RU (Russia), LT (Lithuania), CH (Switzerland), DE (Denmark), EN (England), NL (Netherlands), EE (Estonia), ES (Spain), SE (Sweden), FR (France) and NO (Norway)

In this study, cohabitants were categorized by age cohorts from younger to older. In the youngest age group (15-24), the percentage of cohabiting people varied from 24% in the Ukraine to 94% in Norway. The prime childbearing and marriageable age cohort (25-44) ranged from 11% in Lithuania to 51% in Sweden. In particular, it may be noteworthy that all but three Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Russia and Lithuania) showed that between 20 to 50% of the cohort (aged 25 to 44) cohabited. Such figures do not exist for Korea. I shall now turn to look at Korean academic research.

1-3-2. Korean Research on Cohabiting Couples

While I was searching the literature on Korean cohabiting couples, I realised that cohabitation research was exclusively undertaken in the heterosexual context and that its research history has not been long. Unlike the half-century history of cohabitation research in the west, as mentioned in the Introduction, Korean studies on cohabiting couples have been conducted only for about a decade. Although

heterosexual cohabitation was on the rise in Korea from the 1990s (Gwon Mikyoung and Ji Youngsook 2005), academic research started from the early 2000s. Since then, a few scholars (including MA and PhD students) have attempted to investigate cohabitation, looking at cohabiting women's (aged between 20s-30s) experiences from a feminist perspective (Park Eunjoo 2002; Kim Jiyoung 2005), the emergence of cohabitation in the mass media (mainly soap operas and films) (Yoo Aesoon 2004) and in society (Gwon Mikyoung and Ji Youngsook 2005), traits of cohabiters (Lee Yeonjoo 2008), university students and cohabitation (Kim Mihyun 2009; Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010), from a religious (Christian) perspective (Lee Sungkyu 2011), cohabiting couples' relationship satisfaction, uncertainty and social pressure (Cho Ohsook 2012) and cohabitation among the elderly (Park Gyoungjae 2013). In addition, there is more populist work on cohabitation contributed by a number of people from sociologists, feminists and psychologists to film critics, writers, businesspersons and online cohabitation site managers (see Ham Inhee 2002).

Although most of existing studies focus on heterosexual cohabitation, some examine same-sex cohabiting couples in relation to the right to same-sex marriage or civil partnerships (see Chingusai 2006[15]; Kim Byoungrok 2009; Research Group for the Right to Found a Family 2011[16]; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014[17]). Moreover, there was some pioneering work on homosexuality in the late 1990s, such as Seo Dongjin (1996) and Yoon Gahyun (1997), but they largely reviewed Anglophone studies without closely looking at the lives of Korean same-sex cohabiting couples. There are now a number of studies on lesbians and gays from various disciplines and perspectives from the beginning of the twenty-first century.[18] Some works do touch

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[15] Chingusai is the Korean gay organisation for securing sexual minority groups' rights, launched in February 1994 from the foundation 'Chodonghoe' founded in 1993.
[16] Research group for the Right to Found a Family was founded in 2006 on the suggestion of the Democratic Labour Party. The group comprises organisations and government parties, activists, researchers and specialists, with an aim to eliminate discrimination in relation to family and secure the rights of minorities outside of the institutional family.
[17] This work is conducted in association with Chingusai.
[18] For example, homosexuality in adolescence (Kang Byubgchul and Ha Gyounghee 2006, 2007; Kim Gyoungho 2009; Lee Youngsun, Gwon Bomin and Lee Donghoon 2012), homosexuality and suicide (Heo Jungeun and Park Kyoung 2004), homosexuality and psychological health (Kim Eunkyoung and Gwon Junghye 2004; Yeo Kidong and Lee Mihyoung 2006; Shin Seungbae 2013), homosexuality and HIV (Kang Sunkyoung and Jeon Jihyoung 2013), homophobia (Kim Yonghee and Ban Gunho 2005), homosexuality and stigma (Kang Byoungchul 2011), homosexuality and rights (Moon Sunghak 2001; Oh Byoungsun 2004), same-sex marriage (Kim Byoungrok 2009), homosexuality in culture (Yoon Ahyoung 2013), homosexuality in comics (Ahn Eunsun 2011), homosexuality in soap operas (Hong Jia 2008; Jo Seoyeon 2012; Lee Jahye 2012; Woo Joohyun and Kim Sunnam 2012), homosexuality in

on homosexual cohabitation in the field of family studies, but most have remained at the level of summarising and listing early cohabitation research conducted in the US, rather than exploring Korean lesbian/gay couples as a primary resource (see Jang Sanghee and Jo Jeongmoon 2007; Heo Hyekyoung, Kim Hyesoo and Park Insook 2011). In fact, there are only a few studies focusing on the everyday lives of same-sex couples (see Choi Eunhee 2010; Kim Younghye 2013; Kim Sunnam 2013). Among these researchers, only Kim Sunnam (2013) considered cohabiting lesbian and gay couples, though briefly. I shall now turn to focus specifically on research dealing with different-sex and/or same-sex cohabiting couples who are non-university students (aged over 25), have never been married and are living together under the same roof for more than three months. Heterosexual cohabiters will be discussed first, followed by lesbian and gay cohabiting couples.

Heterosexuals in Cohabitation

To date, there are only two studies that directly deal with the experiences of cohabiting couples in Korea, although there are a few more reports which use secondary data or focus on social attitudes to cohabitation, such as Lee Yeunjoo (2008) and Kim Seungkwon et al. (2013). Of the two studies, Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) both conducted qualitative research, in their MA theses, involving in-depth interviews with ten cohabiting women (aged 20s-30s) from a feminist perspective. Interestingly, both theses had almost the same structure, foci and findings. One might say that Kim Jiyoung replicated Park Eunjoo and corroborated Park Eunjoo's findings.

Both Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) specifically focused on why their female participants came to cohabit and what problems they faced with their male counterparts in what circumstance. Interestingly, almost the same troubles in cohabitation from the female standpoint emerged in research: matters in the division of the financial contribution and housework, the matter of disclosing their

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films (Kim Myounghye and Park Hyuna 2005; Lee Hyoungsook 2009; Kim Kyoungtae 2011; Kim Jeongsun and Min Young 2012), homosexuality in the military (Lee Sangkyoung 2010; Lee Heehoon 2012), homosexuality in religion (Ahn Myoungjoon 2002; Lee Kyoungjik 2002; Baek Eunjeong and Yoo Youngkwon 2004; Heo Namkyul 2008; Shin Eungchul 2008; Shin Deukil 2008) and homosexual individuals (Ryu Hyejin 2010; Sung Jungsook 2010; Joo Youngjoon 2012; Jeong Euisol 2013). These are not discussed here as they are mostly outside of my research area.

cohabitation to parents and problems with their male partner's family (specifically, parents).

Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) found that main reasons for cohabitation were: love, testing relationship compatibility and a rejection of the traditional family system. Practically, monetary issues also arose, but they remained a secondary motivation, not a primary one. They found that most of the interviewees started living together without a clear picture of whether they would marry or not, consistent with Sassler (2004). Others deliberately started cohabiting as a preparation for marriage for financial or career reasons. Some of them changed to viewing their relationship as premarital when they thought this relationship would work even after marriage or when they realised that cohabiting as a woman was very difficult in a patriarchal society such as Korea. Interestingly, however, a large number of the participants in both Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) appeared to want to stick to cohabiting because they were seriously reluctant to have a (Confucianist) patriarchal marriage and family structure. In fact, a considerable number of women wanted to continue cohabiting permanently without marrying. This is inconsistent with some western literature which argues that cohabiting women are more likely to want to marry than male cohabiters (Huang et al. 2011). The reason why some Korean women did not want to marry was that the marriage structure in Korea still requires too much sacrifice and responsibility from married women as daughters-in-law, as wives and mothers. Particularly, three out of ten participants in Park Eunjoo's (2002) and four out of ten interviewees in Kim Jiyoung's (2005) research identified themselves as permanent cohabiters and anti-marriagists, and all of them appeared to have met feminist ideas at university or in their workplaces before, or were working in a feminist organisation. This suggests that those who have acquired feminist ideas were more aware of the Korean patriarchal family and marriage structure than other interviewees in romantic or premarital cohabitation. This made them not want to marry, but only to cohabit.

Living outside the marriage institution may allow couples to live in their own egalitarian way without being unduly influenced by the patriarchal system. This was partly why almost half of the participants in Park Eunjoo's (2002) and in Kim Jiyoung's (2005) research chose to continue to cohabit from a position of anti-

marriage. Paradoxically, however, a majority of them pointed out that the division of housework along with the financial contribution to the household rendered their relationship gendered and unequal in some ways. Thus they had to negotiate, fight and persuade their male partners to sort out the problems.

In both Park Eunjoo's (2002) and Kim Jiyoung's (2005) study, when the cohabiting couples faced certain issues such as the division of housework, some seemed to fall back on a traditional gendered paradigm: female housewife and male breadwinner, and some female cohabiters had to use multiple strategies to equalize their cohabitation. When those tactics did not work, they ended up breaking up with their male partner.

Although most of the interviewees said that their cohabitation was egalitarian in general and particularly in terms of housework division, there were a few cases that were not so equal. Three out of ten participants in Kim Jiyoung's (2005) research appeared to break up with their cohabitee because of difficulties around the division of housework. All of them emphasized that the gendered model of the female housewife and the male breadwinner was deeply rooted in themselves and their male cohabitees as well as in society and this gendered ideology made them actively ask their male partners to act in certain ways. They complained about the fact that it was always them (women) who had to persuade their male partner to do housework equally, while the men did not really care about this. Interestingly, these three interviewees also noted that women's economic power was the main factor to pull their male partners to the negotiating table. One of them said that she had no income when she was with her ex-cohabitee who was much older than her, but lived in his own house and that he earned a lot of money. Even though the woman did not make any financial contribution to the household and advocated equality in housework allocation, she could not accept from her male partner that he expected her to be responsible for all the housework. She said that she had learnt from this cohabitation that 'an intimate couple relationship is also a power relation in terms of economy' (Kim Jiyoung 2005: 38). Since she could not persuade her partner to do more housework, they eventually broke up. In contrast, another two female cohabiters had their own income and they also went through the process of negotiating with their male partner. Both these interviewees said similarly that they did not want to bear

that tiring situation anymore at certain point and they were happy to break up thanks to their economic independence. If they had not had enough money and depended on their partner financially, they might not have been able to finish their relationship that easily.

The importance of women's economic independence was also present in Park Eunjoo's (2002) research. Many interviewees in her study said that they endeavoured to pay the rent and living expenses as equally with their male cohabitee as possible in order to have a good position to negotiate the division of housework. Although some earned less money than their male counterpart, they tended to pay equal amounts of money because they believed that only equal financial contributions could justify an equal division of housework. There was some discrepancy among the interviewees, but most 'achieved' some kind of equal division of housework. In this, Park Eunjoo (2002: 44) argues that the reason why her participants had fairly equal relations with their cohabitee, at least in terms of housework division, might not only be that they provided a fair amount of money for their household, but also perhaps more importantly, because both female and male cohabiters 'did not identify themselves as a married wife and husband, and thus they did not entirely accept the idea of gendered division ideology'.

Although most of the participants in Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) did not seem to conform to the gendered division ideology, they seemed to be concerned about the issue of virginity and that tends to make female cohabiters hesitate to disclose their cohabitation to their parents. That one of Park Eunjoo's (2002: 37) interviewees depicted her disclosure of her cohabitation to others as 'coming out' may represent how seriously taboo it is in Korea for women to disclose their cohabitation to others. As the interviewee explained, revealing women's cohabitation in a society where women's virginity is still considered as something to be kept until marriage made it similar to the situation of coming out as a lesbian/gay in heteronormative society. Both Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) found that their participants disclosed their cohabitation to others selectively. For example, they tended to tell their close friends or someone who seemed to understand women's cohabitation while most of them did not reveal it to their parents.

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'Women's cohabitation' (Kim Jiyoung 2005: 58) appeared to mean different things from men's cohabitation, solely because of the pressure on women to preserve their virginity. The greatest concern for the female cohabiters in terms of disclosing their cohabitation was their parents. Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) both found that most female cohabiters did not disclose their cohabitation to their parents while most of their male counterparts let their parents know about their cohabitation. Women seemed to worry about disappointing their parents who might think that their daughter was sexually damaged by cohabiting. It also became clear that female cohabiters were concerned that their male partner's parents would require them to inhabit the conventional daughter-in-law role, once their cohabitation was disclosed.

On the other hand, men's cohabitation also seemed to be interpreted negatively. Kim Jiyoung (2005) states that there is a double standard regarding the sexuality of cohabiting women and men. Cohabiting women tend to be blamed for their sexually promiscuous behaviour, whereas cohabiting men are framed as irresponsible people who do not take responsibility for their cohabiting female partner and also who attempt to avoid their duty as a son of their family. Although cohabiters try to conceal their cohabitation from their parents, cohabitation is easily leaked, especially to a man's parents. Once the man's parents are aware of their son's cohabitation, they tend to view their son's female partner as their daughter-in-law and it is the beginning of another stressful story for female cohabiters. However, in the situation where most cohabiting men did not make much effort to hide their cohabitation from their parents and as their cohabitation went on, it was likely to be revealed by chance to the male cohabiters' parents.

Kim Jiyoung (2005) argues that although cohabitation in Korean society is situated outside of institutional marriage, still the relation requires the cohabiters, particularly females, to carry out certain roles which are expected in the family (marriage) system. This causes trouble between cohabiting partners, and women try to use their male cohabitees as a negotiator or a shield against his parents. Women's negotiating power may be stronger than married women's by adjusting or refusing their partner's parents' requirements. Yet, female cohabiters as well as males are not entirely free from the family system. This is largely consistent with Park Eunjoo's (2002) research. Park Eunjoo (2002) points out that most men are not affected by disclosure

of cohabitation to any of their parents, whereas women experience difficulties dealing with their own parents and negotiating with their male cohabitee's parents due to the virginity ideology and the expected roles as daughters-in-law, although they are not technically daughters-in-law.

So far, I have closely looked at Park Eunjoo's (2002) and Kim Jiyoung's (2005) studies that dealt with different-sex cohabitation. Now, I shall turn to consider the literature on same-sex cohabiting couples in Korea.

Lesbians and Gays in Cohabitation

In Korea, researching or documenting sexual minority groups such as lesbians, gays, transgenders and intersexuals, was not done until the 1990s when (online/offline) communities and human rights organisations for LGBTI began to be launched. Although sexual minority groups have tended to be hidden due to the history of Confucianism and the dominance of Christianity and its prevalent homophobia, every time when LGBTI rights were in danger from the conservative government, they came out in public and appealed for attention and support.[19] Despite these grassroots efforts, academic attention seems to be limited, particularly in terms of the lives of cohabiting same-sex couples.

There are only a handful number of scholars and early career researchers who have attempted to explore the everyday lives of lesbian and gay couples. Chingusai's (2006) work is well documented and one of the most extensive and explorative studies in Korea. It is based on in-depth interviews with seven lesbians and gays who either had past cohabitation experiences or who were cohabiting at the time of the interview. Although the interviews are presented as raw data but not analysed, they are significant because they show how the same-sex couples met, how they developed their romantic relationship, how they cohabited, how they lived their cohabitation, how they ended their cohabitation and how they viewed civil partnership and same-sex marriage. On the same trajectory, the Research Group for the Right to Found a Family (2011) also examined the lives of same-sex couples with

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[19] For example the campaign for including acts to protect students who are sexually in the minority group into the Regulations for school students in Seoul in 2001, the protest to include anti-discrimination acts for LGBTI in 2007 and the protest to appeal to the Seoul Mayor, Park Wonsoon, to reconsider his position which changed from full support for LGBTI to partial support in 2014.

a specific focus on social policies to support their rights to partnership, that currently do not exist in Korea.

Kim Sunnam's (2013) work may be the only qualitative research dealing with cohabiting same-sex couples, if briefly. Her main focus was not 'cohabiting' lesbian and gay couples, but involved some participants who cohabited at the time (eight out of eighteen participants) when she interviewed them. Kim Sunnam (2013) argues that cohabitation among same-sex couples operates similarly and simultaneously differently from heterosexual legitimated relationships such as marriage and family. On the one hand, some of her participants who were cohabiting tended to project their cohabitation upon heterosexual marriage or family relationships. On the other hand, some seemed to be concerned about moving away from 'dating' emotions and close to the negative ways of heterosexual 'marriage/family' that requires dependence, responsibility and motherly roles, and this (heterosexual) family-like cohabitation was described by one of her lesbian participants as 'fetters' (Kim Sunnam 2013: 114). Attempting to show a possibility that cohabiting lesbian and gay couples associated with heteronormative family practices, Kim Sunnam (2013) suggests that homosexual cohabitation may deconstruct and reconstruct the heteronormative marriage/family norms. However, there are no details in her research as to what this means, but that in what my work addresses.

Given the dearth of research on cohabiting same-sex couples, Na Youngjeong et al. (2014) in association with Chingusai released a very recent study on Korean LGBTI people combining of quantitative and qualitative methods (analysing survey data from 3,159 participants, interview data from focus groups with 31 participants and in-depth interview data from 18 participants). This extensive work which was conducted over two years (Na Youngjeong et al. 2014) found that 45.3% of the respondents were in a couple relationship and the average dating duration was about 30 months. 25.5% of those who said that they were in an intimate couple relationship appeared to be cohabiting couples. Among them, 33.5% had cohabited for more than five years and 80.9% said that they were satisfied with their cohabitation and their partner. This result suggests that Korean LGBTI cohabiting couples are much happier in their relationship and partner choice than heterosexual married couples (70.6% of heterosexual men and 59.8% of women said that they were mostly

satisfied with their relationship and partner), according to the national social survey (KOSIS 2014c).

More specifically, Na Youngjeong et al. (2014) found that over half of lesbians (55.5%) were in an intimate couple relationship and 31.1% of them, that is 17.3% of all lesbian respondents, appeared to be cohabiting. The number of cohabiting lesbians turned out to be double in comparison with gays. 42% of gays said that they were in a couple relationship and 20.2% of them (only 8.4% of the total gay respondents) were cohabiting. In particular, the average duration of lesbian cohabiting relationship was about 3 years (35 months) and 16.8% cohabited for more than five years. The degree of satisfaction in their cohabitation also appeared high. 77.4% of lesbian cohabitants said that they were happy with their relationship, 21.1% 'so so' and 1.5% 'not happy'. The average duration of gay cohabitation and the degree of satisfaction in their cohabitation was not investigated in this study apart from the average dating duration of two years and three months. These findings are largely consistent with existing research in the United States (Kurdek 2003, 2006, 2008; Lau 2012).

So far, I have discussed Korean literature on different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples, which is fairly limited. Cohabitation outside of heteronormative marriage is considered as an indicator of the transformation of intimacy through individualisation in the second/late modernity. By looking at the relevant theories of Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Geernsheim (2002), I shall attempt to outline the theoretical context for cohabitation.

1-3-3. Western Debates on Individualisation and Transformation of Intimacy
Second modernity (Beck 1994) and late modernity (Giddens 1991) emerge from the risks and side effects of the previous (first) modernisation process. Both Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens agree that individualisation is part of second/late modernisation. The feature of detraditionalisation in late/second modernity has allowed western society to become individualised. This in turn leads to a transformation of intimacy in a wider context. The transformation of intimacy is one of the key outcomes of the individualisation process (Giddens 1992). Intimate relationships have become much more diverse through individualisation, shifting

from the heteronormative conjugal relationship based on romantic love to what Giddens calls 'pure relationships':

> A situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it (Giddens 1992: 58).

In this sense, pure relationships last as long as both parties give and gain enough satisfaction. Giddens highlights the possibility of a pure relationship that can emerge from other contexts of sexuality besides heterosexual marriage, such as same-sex and different-sex cohabitation. A pure relationship is characterized by confluent love. In Giddens's term, confluent love is 'active, contingent love, and therefore jars with the "for-ever", "one-and-only" qualities of the romantic love complex' (1992: 61, emphasis in original). Shaping romantic love as a gendered term to some degree, Giddens argues that confluent love makes pure relationships gender-free. To put it differently, in theory there should be no gendered hierarchical relation between a woman and a man in a couple relationship, and the couple relationship does not necessarily have to be heterosexual. This has eventually led to a weakening of the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, and furthermore to eroding the meaning of family. However, this view seems too optimistic, ignoring persistent gender inequalities and showing a lack of consideration of differences across cultures (Jamieson 1999).

The connection between the transformation of intimacy and gender-free relationships is critiqued in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995). They argue that although an increasing number of women entered into the labour market through individualisation and although the growth of women's participation in outside work resulted in their economic independence from men, this does not mean that women become equal to men. Rather, for women at least, individualisation has incompletely operated and women's familial obligations continue to be expected to be theirs. This might merely generate a different way in which women rely on men. However, the more the individualised biography affects women, the harder women must achieve financial independence from men. In the process women have begun to separate from

men slowly, but steadily. As a result, it eventually leads family relationships to become elective and results in the post-familial family that signifies diverse family forms (Beck-Gernsheim 1998). Although the views of Beck-Gernsheim (1998) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) seem to be more realistic than Giddens' (1992), they have also been criticised by many sociologists for their limited concern with the different social structures across cultures (see Heaphy 2007; Smart 2007).

Nonetheless, the theories of modernisation, individualisation and transformation of intimacy have significantly impacted on non-European countries such as Korea, and they have been effectively accommodated and utilised in important ways in Korea as shall be discussed next.

1-3-4. Individualisation and the Transformation of Intimacy under Compressed Modernity in Korea: Individualisation without Individualism

The western theories of modernisation, individualisation and transformation of intimacy (Giddens 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) have been influential in Korea which has undergone modernisation in a similar manner to western countries, but not exactly in the same way (Chang Kyungsup 2009; Shim Younghee 2011; Shim Younghee and Han Sangjin 2012). Pointing out that Korea has experienced modernisation in an extremely short time compared to the west, Chang Kyungsup (1999) termed this phenomenon 'compressed modernity'. Shim Younghee and Han Sangjin (2012) agree with this and claim that Korea's second modernity needs to be re-examined because the sociocultural background of Korea, and largely East Asia, is rather different from that of western countries. With these points in mind, I will briefly discuss the conception of 'individualisation without individualism', which is the by-product arisen from compressed modernity in Korea (Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung 2010; Shim Younghee 2011). I will then move on to discuss how this has impacted on cohabitation relationships in Korea.

Theories of modernisation, individualisation and transformation of intimacy have been questioned by Korean scholars in terms of their applicability to Korean culture (Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung 2010; Shim Younghee 2011). It is widely agreed that Korea is in the second/late modernity after the first modernisation through radical industrialisation. A certain transformation of intimacy, for example a

decreasing marriage rate, an increasing divorce rate, low fertility and the emergence of new family-like relations such as the cohabitation of different-sex and same-sex couples are important indicators that evidence Korea's second/late modernity (see Giddens 1992, see also Shim Younghee 2011).

The transformation of familial relationships, in particular, has been much debated in Korea in terms of individualisation theories. Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung (2010) place stress on Korean women in discussing individualisation under compressed modernity in Korea boosted by societal families, so-called Chaebol, as well as individual ones, because they see that family relations in Korea are gendered, due in part to the Confucian heritage and partly due to industrial capitalism (see also Chang Kyungsup 1997). Confucianism prescribes hierarchical relations between the individual, family and state and also between individuals by gender and age (Eun Kisoo 2000). That is, the state is regarded as more important than individual families and individuals, and also women are expected to be subjugated to men and the younger to the elder. The relation between the state and individuals is considered as between parents and children based on an ideology of filial piety and this strong familial bond was the primary engine in modernity in Korea (Chang Kyungsup 1997).

In the industrial period, on the one hand, Korean women working in factories to support the state's industrial plan were treated as the pillar of the country under the massive industrialisation of the 1960s to the 1980s, but later stigmatised as not virtuous and not housewifely women within the patriarchal familial mechanism (Kim Won 2005). In the family structure, on the other hand, Korean women seem to have much more freedom and autonomy compared to the past, although their traditional gendered roles as daughter, wife, mother and daughter-in-law were still in place. To put it in a different way, women became able to participate in the labour market and they came to have wider choices in the family, thanks to modernisation and individualisation. Familial duties and burdens however still remained with women. This may be indicative of the dilemma of modernised and individualised women in Korea and it is described as 'individualisation without individualism' (Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung 2010, see also Shim Younghee 2011).

Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung (2010) see defamiliation and (risk-aversive) individualisation as core symptoms of the phenomenon of individualisation without individualism. They define defamiliation as:

> A social tendency in which individuals try to reduce the familial burden of social reproduction by intentionally controlling the *effective* scope and duration of family life. *De*familiation here denotes a *de*crease in family life and relations rather than a complete abandonment or abolition of them. Defamiliation can be conceived as a type of *refamiliation*, denoting various patterns of demographic, social and psychological restructuring of families (2010: 542; italics in original).

Chang Kyungsup and Song Minyoung (2010) argue that defamiliation might be the only option for Korean women because what they have gone through is not actually the western form of individualisation, but an adapted Korean version of individualisation, namely risk-aversive individualisation, by '*institutionalised familism*'(2010: 544; italics in original). Risk-aversive individualisation is defined by them as:

> A social tendency whereby individuals try to minimize family-associated risks of modern life (or modernity) by extending or returning to individualised stages of life (2010: 542).

In other words, risk-aversive individualisation could be understood as a safe form of individualisation, particularly for Korean women, who do not have equal power as men in the family or in society, due to the Confucian familialism. Consequently, most Korean women tend to stay constrainedly in the patriarchal family system while partly adopting the western form of individualisation through defamiliation and risk-aversive individualisation. This partial accommodation of individualisation constitutes individualisation without individualism.

The idea of individualisation without individualism is strongly supported and developed by Shim Younghee (2011) with her specific concern about the new family forms derived from conflicts between the rigid family system and changing personal

intimacy in Korea. Considering the emergence of the 'post-familial family' in second modernity in the west (Beck-Gernsheim 2002), Shim Younghee (2011) emphasizes that Korea has experienced individualisation in second modernity in a different way in terms of changing family forms and personal intimacy. This gap between the west and Korea is also indicated by Shim Younghee and Han Sangjin (2012). It derives from the indigenous cultural characteristics of Korea (and also largely East Asia) of community-oriented tradition and it results in family-oriented individualisation. The significant influence of familialism in the process of individualisation in Korea is reflected in Chang Kyungsup (1997) and many other Korean sociologists' work (see Hong Chansook 2013; Kim Hyekyoung 2013; Shim Younghee 2013; Lee Soonmi 2014). Confucian familialism engenders individualisation without individualism in Korea and it may be the ground on which unmarried cohabitation is regarded as an irresponsible action against filial piety.

1-3-5. Cohabitation as Unfilial Behaviour

In western and northern European countries and the United States, the difference between cohabitation and marriage is often expressed as 'a piece of paper'. This stands for the legal registration of marriage (or the marriage licence), although a few western countries have already enacted relevant cohabitation acts, largely equivalent to marriage ones (see Sanchez-Gassen and Perelli-Harris 2014). However, this is not the case in Korea. Confucianism in association with Korean family structure stipulates men's superiority over women, for example, by granting only sons, the first son in particular, authority to succeed their (patrilineal) family line and lead their family, while women's status is no better than a machine to provide baby boys and a filial carer for their husband and his family members, particularly his parents (Chen and Li 2014). This gendered familial structure has become problematic for Korean women in particular.

Women and men increasingly reject the traditional, so called 'Confuscian', family and choose cohabitation over marriage. Women do not want to take all the given responsibilities as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law, and men also do not want to be burdened as a head of their family. As discussed earlier in Introduction, however, marriage is still considered as a union of two families, rather than two individuals. That is, marriage controlled by Confucian familialism is also involved by one's

parents and it becomes one's filial responsibility for parents. In this vein, Confucian familialism locates cohabitation as an unfilial relation in Korea. This may be one of the primary differences from the way in which cohabitation is viewed in the west. It accounts in part for the limited work that exists on cohabitation in Korea.

1-3-6. Gaps in Current Research

I have argued throughout this chapter that there is little research on cohabiting couples in the Korean context and that the existing research is dominated by certain themes and paradigms. Given that almost all of the literature in relation to cohabitation focused on heterosexuals, any understanding of the lives of Korean same-sex cohabiting couples remains limited. Furthermore, the research is gendered to some extent. Female cohabiters' experiences are highlighted in a handful of works whereas men's experiences and voices are muted, although heterosexual couple relationships operate in a woman-man dyadic relation. In the same vein, there has been no attempt to research different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples together, although the lives of same-sex couples are increasingly visible in Korea.

As indicated earlier, in several studies (Park Eunjoo 2002; Kim Jiyoung 2005; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014), certain themes such as the motivations to cohabit, disclosure of the couple relationship and the ways in which cohabiting couples live have been investigated. Since this choice is not easy under Confucian familialism, that very factor may explain these emphases. The existing findings are largely focused on particular reasons for cohabitation without considering the context in which cohabiting couples decide on their cohabitation. Secondly, revealing one's cohabitation relationship has only been analysed in relation to cohabitees' parents but not in relation to wider social circles such as siblings, friends, work colleagues and neighbours. Lastly, research on the actual lives of cohabiting couples has largely paid attention to the division of finance and housework and the relation with the partner's family (usually men's parents). These issues are obviously important, particularly given that women's status is inferior to men's in couple and family relationships. However, none of existing studies consider these gendered and familial aspects in detail. Consequently, the cohabiting couples' lives in terms of gender and family practices are absent. It is in this research vacuum that my work is located.

In this literature review, I have set the scene for the different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples in Korea. While sketching the theoretical background (Giddens 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) that shapes cohabitation in a certain way, I outlined the ways in which modernisation, individualisation and the transformation of intimacy have been applied to Korea in its context of Confucian familialism. I also indicated some of the gaps in current research that structure my analysis chapters.

1-4. Thesis Structure

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, I deal with the methodology underpinning my research. I discuss the perspectives that I brought to bear on my work and the research process. This includes how I found my participants, the actual interview process as well as reflections on myself as researcher and the researched in terms of positionality. The processes after the fieldwork, such as transcribing, translating, and my data analysis will also be discussed. Next, my first empirical analysis chapter, Chapter 3, examines how and where the participants met their partner, what motivated them to consider living together and how they actually entered into cohabitation. Chapter 4 investigates the extent to which the cohabiting couples disclosed their cohabitation to their significant others (i.e. parents, siblings, friends, work colleagues and neighbours) and the reasons for disclosure or concealment. The results of the degree to which they revealed their cohabitation to others are analysed in terms of both the gender and the sexual identity of the participants. The last analysis chapter, Chapter 5, explores the cohabiting couples' everyday lives. I discuss the ways in which they reported conducting their everyday cohabitation in terms of certain practices. Finally, the concluding chapter, Chapter 6, beginning with a reflection on self, summarises the key debates in the existing literature on cohabiting couples in Korea and revisits the key findings as these emerged in each chapter, followed by some future research suggestions.

CHAPTER 2. Methodology

Introduction

> To undertake feminist research is to witness resistance (Liamputtong
> 2013: 12).

The work for this thesis involved feminist methodology, semi-structured interviews and qualitative analysis with a feminist lens. I, as researcher, adopted a feminist perspective because my research focus is on the articulated experiences of resistive people othered by the patriarchal and heteronormative social norms in Korea, and I witness them, hence undertaking feminist research as quoted above.

Feminist research is rooted in aiming to listen to people's (mostly women's) hidden voices in order to make them audible, in trying to have non-hierarchical relations between researchers and respondents, and in offering the researcher an opportunity to practise (self-)reflexivity (Harding 1987; Stanley and Wise 1990; Jayaratne and Stewart 1991; Reinharz 1992; Weiss 1994; Hekman 2007; Hesse-Biber 2007; Naples 2007; Letherby 2011; Liamputtong 2013). This study, in fact, stems from my anxiety as a woman who is always treated differently by the patriarchal social order and as a lesbian hoping to live together with a partner in a society where heteronormative reality forces lesbians and gays to be hidden. As I am emotionally attached to my research due to its direct relevance to my life situation, it made me to constantly negotiate the extent to which I revealed myself, for example in relation to interviewing my participants, having conversations with them after the interviews, analysing the interview data, and finally writing up the thesis. Therefore, one of the most vital concerns in this research was practising reflexivity. This is central to this thesis as well as to its methodology.

This chapter is divided into four areas. First, I discuss my research design, focusing on the rationale for choosing a feminist perspective and semi-structured in-depth interviewing. The matter of couple interviews, whether they should be conducted separately or jointly, is also included in this section. Second, I outline the process of recruitment and sample composition. Participants' basic information such as age,

cohabitation length, the number of cohabitation experiences and education level are discussed. Third, I describe how the interviews were carried out and the issues that arose in this, for example, the question of interviewing friends and acquaintances. Also importantly, I carefully discuss how I practised reflexivity, conceptualising the idea of 'an insider with an outsider mask' and 'an outsider with an insider mask' by exploring the boundary between insider and outsider status in negotiating with myself and the interviewees about my lesbian identity. And finally, I deal with the processes after the fieldwork: transcribing and translating issues and the data analysis.

2-1. Research Design

This study was designed to explore the growing phenomenon of cohabitation among unmarried couples in the Republic of Korea and examine the meanings of this for those who intentionally or inevitably live outside the norm in Korea. To examine this research focus, I employed semi-structured in-depth interviews from a feminist standpoint. I shall now discuss why I chose a feminist perspective and why I used semi-structured in-depth interviews to undertake my fieldwork.

2-1-1. Interviewing with a Feminist Perspective

Unmarried cohabiting couples in Korea are to this day (2015) marginalised. This is the case whether they are same-sex or different-sex couples. As Hesse-Biber (2007) suggests, a feminist approach is appropriate for researching marginalised groups such as women and homosexuals, because giving them a chance to talk about their experiences is a very good start for them to gain empowerment. This was in particular the case with my heterosexual participants (Alice, Wonseok and Pony)[20] who had mostly disclosed their cohabitation relationship either not at all or only to very few people. Alice never told anyone that she was cohabiting with her boyfriend, and Wonseok and Pony let only a couple of their trusted friends know about their cohabitation. Heterosexuals therefore often seemed to enjoy talking in the interviews and frequently expressed frustration that they could not talk about matters in relation to their cohabiting relationships with others. For example, Wonseok said: 'I can tell you everything because you know everything. But I couldn't with my friends. I just

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[20] My participants' names were pseudonymised.

couldn't, could I?' In contrast to these three participants who seemed to enjoy the empowerment to talk about things which they never shared with others, most participants, particularly lesbian and gay participants, seemed to have more limited problems with talking about their cohabitation in their daily lives, because most of them had lesbian/gay friends from the community to whom they were able to talk. This will be discussed in more detail later in Chapter 4.

Much writing on feminist methodology emphasizes the importance of having a non-hierarchical relation between the researcher and the researched (Reinharz 1992; Oakley 2000; Mason 2002; Brooks and Hesse-Biber 2007). To create a non-hierarchical relation with the participants, I used different strategies in each interview phase: before, during and after the interviews. Before interviewing, I devolved certain decisions to the participants, for example whether they would agree to their partner's involvement in the interview, and when and where they would be interviewed. The consent form (Appendix 1) dealing with anonymity and confidentiality (including where both partners were interviewed) was agreed and signed before the interviews. Thus, it provided the participants with the power of controlling the degree to which they revealed their private stories, and further the power to withdraw from the interview. Moreover, by making clear that they could pass over questions with which they were not comfortable during the interviews, I tried to ensure that the participants did not feel pressured to answer questions which they did not want to address. During the interviews I also intentionally blurred the boundary between researcher and respondent by telling the participants that 'I'd love to hear your cohabitation experience as a prospective cohabitant', not 'I'm so interested in your cohabitation experience as a researcher', so that they could forget to an extent that they were 'being interviewed' for research purposes.

Wengraf (2001) advises that to conduct semi-structured interviews, a researcher has to prepare well in advance, because the success of the research depends on how well the researcher performs and improvises during the interviews. He further argues that a researcher cannot predict with a 100 per cent certainty what will happen during the interviews, and thus the researcher needs to be well aware of her/his interview themes, questions, and how to deal with interviewees in an appropriate manner. Bearing this in mind, I endeavoured to gain rich responses by encouraging

participants to talk at length through probing, nodding and actively reacting to their (non-)verbal cues. In ending every interview, moreover, I asked participants whether they had comments or suggestions for my research. This was not only a sort of formal ending, but also an attempt to make the participants feel and think that they were actually important part of the research.

As Harding (1987: 3) points out, a distinctive feature in feminist research is 'sensitivity to the significance of gender within society'. This perspective was core in my research. Gender was key in unmarried cohabiting couples' articulated experiences. Although there has been some discussion about feminist research dealing with male perspectives and experiences, there has been little discussion about the ways in which feminist methodology deals with research on heterosexual couples. Focusing on men's perspectives and experiences as well as women's from a feminist standpoint is worthwhile for understanding women's oppression (Peters et al. 2008). Women's experiences, especially in a heteronormative couple dyad, cannot help being influenced by their male partners. Moreover, not all men live within conventional social norms, protected by patriarchy, and thus they may also experience oppression (Peters et al. 2008). Hence, the term 'feminist' in feminist methodology or feminist research does not only refer to the exploration of women, but rather it is extended to issues of 'differences' with multiple perspectives, as Hekman (2007: 541) suggests. From this standpoint, Peters et al. (2008: 375) argue that 'feminist approaches work well with couples who do not follow a pathway that is accepted by dominant sectors of society'. That is, couples who do not conform to the prevailing social mores, for example unmarried cohabiting heterosexual couples and lesbian and gay couples in Korea, are likely to experience oppression both as individuals and as a partner relationship, and these couples need to be researched from a feminist perspective. My research then employed a feminist methodology with a focus on three priorities: a) using gender as a key category in my research, b) drawing on relevant feminist work, and c) taking a materialist position which suggests that the concrete living conditions of my interviewees' impact on their lives and their self-perceptions.

I chose semi-structured in-depth interviews as my research method. I had three main reasons for this. Firstly, I wanted to examine the lives of unmarried cohabiting

couples by exploring their articulated experiences. In addition to Punch's view (2005: 168) that interviewing is a very good way of accessing 'how people perceive a specific issue, the way in which people give specific meanings to their experiences, how people differently emphasize their experiences at diverse levels, and the way in which people live within constructions of reality', I also agree with Hesse-Biber (2007) that interviewing is particularly useful for performing feminist research because it offers interviewees an opportunity to talk about their experiences, especially when these have been untold and viewed indifferently in society. It provides researchers with insights into the world of the researched. By having face-to-face and one-on-one conversations, moreover, interviews allow both the researcher and the researched the 'a form of collaboration (Holstein and Gubrium 2003: 19). The in-depth interview, recognised as 'the chosen method for feminist researchers' (Oakley 2000: 47), is an integral way to seeking to understand 'subjective' experiences by looking at the participants' stories (Hesse-Biber 2007: 118). As my research focus targeted non-married cohabiting couples who mostly do not declare their situation publicly, I as researcher could provide an opportunity for the interviewees to explore their views and thus through my work to make their lives visible in Korean society. Thirdly, from the beginning, I intentionally excluded fully structured interviews, because I did not seek mere answers to fixed questions. Rather, I aimed to explore what people talk and think about as much detail as possible. I also do not think that there is an unstructured interview, as Mason (2002) argues, because all (academic) interviews have an agenda or themes based on their research concern, and thus it is unlikely that a researcher asks an interviewee to 'tell me anything' without any guidance.

With this semi-structured in-depth interview method, I generated a number of questions (see Appendix 2) relevant to my research topic. The list of questions was used as the basis for my interviews. In addition, I kept field notes to record all the processes related to the interviews, for example, how I obtained contact with participants, how I met participants, the content of mobile phone texts and emails I exchanged with the participants, specific behaviours of interviewees such as their facial expressions during the interviews, what I felt about each interview and interviewee, and small talk after the interviews. Unlike other researchers who may write during the interviews, however, I did not write anything down while

interviewing, but only wrote before and after the interviews (see Savin-Baden and Major 2013). Kvale (2007) points out that a researcher making extensive notes in an interview could distract the interviewee, interrupting the flow of the conversation. What I was more worried about, was that writing something down while interviewing might remind the interviewee of my position as researcher and who was the researched. This sense arose from my personal experience where I felt I was being tested or evaluated by a researcher who was jotting down something continuously when I was talking.

Although I did not write my fieldwork notes during the interviews, I actively used them afterwards. Especially right after ending the recording, some participants started talking about their recent experiences which were slightly irrelevant to my research, but seemed important to me. It may be because they felt closer to me after going through the interview, accepting me as now known to them. Or, maybe they felt more at ease without a recorder and could speak more freely, disclosing at greater length. Daly (2007: 149) terms this 'door handle disclosure', and alludes to the fact that it may cause 'a difficult dilemma' for a researcher, because the researcher has to decide whether the post-interview talk can be included in her/his research. I used two strategies when I faced such moments. One was that I asked the interviewees if they minded my re-turning on the recorder (I did this with Choikang, for example). The other strategy was that I said to them, 'Oh, that's shame I can't record what you said just now. It sounds really important for my research!' This happened when I had dinner with Jinny and Namul after the interview on the day. Jinny kindly told me: 'You can memorise what we're talking about now, can't you? Then, I'm sure you may be able to record things in your notes or whatever afterwards.' The reason why I did not ask them directly whether I could include the post-interview conversation on my recorder was, as suggested by Bryman (2012), that I did not want to make them feel observed during the dinner. I saw that having dinner and a conversation with the participants after the interview was as important and valuable as trying to establish rapport at the beginning of the interviews, because not only did they offer me their personal life stories during the interviews, but they were also prospective recommenders for future participants. Hence, I always behaved honourably towards the participants after the interviews, letting things happen naturally. I did not want to show them myself as 'just' a researcher trying to

collect as much data as possible from them, but as a 'trustworthy' researcher who would not abuse their trust. This was not because they could withdraw their information at any time according to the consent form, but because I wanted to engage with them ethically.

In addition to keeping the fieldwork notes that record all the processes associated with the interviews, I also kept recording what I felt and thought in the fieldwork notes while I transcribed and translated the interview data. Some would argue that the stage of transcribing is the first step to analysing the data (Wengraf 2001; Branley 2004; Byrne 2004), but I would add to it that transcribing (and also translating in my case) is an extension of the fieldwork, because the process actually situates a researcher back in the time where s/he interviewed each participant by re-listening to the interview data. Hence, I deploy the fieldwork notes throughout the thesis, engaging them in the analysis chapters as well as the methodology chapter here, not only for the purpose of referring to what happened in the fieldwork, but also for the purpose of practising reflexivity about myself after the interviews. These transcribing and translating issues will be considered in detail later in the section *Post Interview Processes*.

To record, I chose to use a recording application (Google Recorder) on my smartphone. Some researchers argue that tape recorders are quite vulnerable and not easy to carry safely (Bryman 2012; Liamputtong 2013). Unlike tape recorders, using a smartphone as a recorder allowed me to upload the recorded interview files to Dropbox and Google Drive as well as my personal laptop right after I finished each interview, which was the safest and most convenient way to save the interview data. I downloaded several recording applications from the Android Market and tested them to check which one had the best functionality and eventually I chose Google Recorder, because it offered clear recording quality and the files were compatible with my laptop. I also used an iPhone with the Voice Memos application just in case. I always fully charged the two smart phones and brought battery charger cables so that I could charge at any time if the smartphone was running out. International roaming was not set on the two mobile phones, and thus there was no risk of being interrupted by phone calls or texts.

2-1-2. Interviewing Couples Separately

Since this study aimed to hear cohabiting couples' stories, I had to decide before the fieldwork whether I would conduct the couple interviews jointly or separately. Many researchers have pointed out the merits and limitations of joint interviews and individual interviews (see Aquilino 1993; Valentine 1999; Morris 2001; Peters et al. 2008; Taylor and Vocht 2011). Separate interviews allow an individual to talk freely and express her/his own views without any worries about her/his partner's objection or being hurt (Peters et al. 2008). However, Morris (2001) points out a critical limitation of the individual interview that it might imply that there are secrets between a couple or at least there is something a couple may not want to share, and thus couples might hesitate to participate when a separate interview is required. As for the joint interviews, on the other hand, Taylor and Vocht (2011: 1577) argue that partners can collaborate to respond to questions, probing, correcting, challenging or introducing fresh themes for discussion that can result in richer data.

Simultaneously, however, the presence of a partner might reduce the extent to which a party in a couple discloses specific matters when dealing with sensitive issues in particular (Aquilino 1993). In addition, one person might dominate the interview while the other is mostly silent, or conversely both parties could be eager to talk or they might conflict during the interview as sometimes happens (see Valentine 1999). Although there are understandable advantages and disadvantages to both, the separate interview and the joint interview, I decided to interview cohabiting couples separately because I wanted to focus on individuals' own views rather than views tailored by the partner's presence. I also expected that there could be some opinions or truths that people might not want to reveal to their partner or people might not talk about when their partner was present, and this turned out to be correct in many of the cases where both parties to a couple participated in the interview (Sinbi and Cogito, Alice and Wonseok, Sunyoung and Sarang, Leslie and Jinseok and Rehai and Jina). For example, Cogito did not mention that he had had a vasectomy, while Sinbi told me. Moreover, Jina did not know about her partner's (Rehai) previous cohabitation experience, saying that, 'You know, she hasn't cohabited with anyone previously, so it seems she has no idea what it would be like.', while Rehai talked to me about her former cohabitation experience. In addition, realistically, the difficulty of arranging interviews with both parties at the same time was also a consideration as it was not

easy to speak to both within the same time frame because of their busy lifestyles. Therefore, I chose to interview couples separately and it went well without noticeable problems on the whole.

2-2. The Recruitment of the Interviewees

I sought to recruit a purposive sample of unmarried heterosexuals, lesbians and gays who were 'currently' cohabiting with their partner through word-of-mouth and snowball sampling. The reason why I chose to recruit participants by these means was that my research targets were not easy to access through a public approach (see Saunders 2012).

With respect to the sample size, I followed Guest et al.'s (2006) suggestion that twelve participants within a homogeneous group may be appropriate, particularly when a researcher designs a comparative study with a few different groups. I aimed to interview twelve participants (7 couples[21]) at least in each group: unmarried cohabiting heterosexual, lesbian and gay couples. I also intended to recruit an evenly distributed sample in terms of the participants' age range and the length of cohabitation. Yet, I failed to recruit enough gay participants, while the number of lesbian and heterosexual participants was as intended. This failure of recruiting gay participants will be discussed further in the following section, *Sample Composition*.

My fieldwork was carried out over five months between 30 March and 20 September 2012 including finding participants and interviewing them. I had planned to seek participants living in central Seoul, the capital city of Korea and my hometown, in the light of transportation expenses, the matter of accommodation and language issues (dialect). In addition, as I am from Seoul, almost all my relations and social network are based in Seoul and I know the districts, locations and how to move by public transport. However, the research focus on Seoul was expanded to the region of Kyungki, which is a suburb of Seoul, because some of the participants lived in Kyungki. This geographic extension was a result of my snowball sampling which meant that I had to go where I could meet participants introduced through

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[21] There were possibilities of either partner in a couple refusing an interview, which meant that even if I interviewed six couples, the total number of participants could be less than twelve. Therefore, I planned to interview seven couples so that the total number of interviewees would hopefully be no less than twelve.

snowballing. This also implies that I had difficulties recruiting participants as those who cohabit are secretive about it. I therefore had to expand the geographical context. Yet, I interviewed most people in Seoul as they worked in Seoul, and I interviewed the rest in the Kyungki area (Jinny and Namul in Ansan, and Bud in Ilsan). Given that all areas were conveniently connected to central Seoul by public transport and people in Kyungki do not have a strong dialect, interviewing participants living in Kyungki was not a problem.

Before I went to Korea to conduct my fieldwork, I contacted some of my friends (Alice and Lime) who were interested in my research and had made a verbal promise to take part in the interviews. I asked them whether they could persuade their partner to participate in the interviews and whether they could introduce any cohabiting friends or acquaintances to me. Both of them replied that they would be happy to be involved in my study and their partner also agreed, but they said that they could not find any other cohabiting friends or acquaintances. They promised that they would keep asking their friends. I realised that finding cohabiting couples would not be easy, and thus I needed to secure enough time to gain the participants I had planned for. I thought that six months of fieldwork would be enough to carry out the interviews, but there were a number of unexpected events and I began to run out of time. I will discuss this further below.

As soon as I arrived in Korea, I contacted friends who might know cohabiting couples, and explained to them what my research was about and how the interviews would be conducted, so that they could give their friends or acquaintances some information beforehand. It also helped them to decide whether they wanted to take part in my research or not. In the beginning, I only asked friends to find participants and used snowballing with the participants I had already interviewed (see Browne 2005). There were two reasons for this. On the one hand, since the issue of unmarried cohabiting couples is still taboo in Korea, I could not advertise for participants in public places such as libraries or public institutions. And on the other hand, I decided not to advertise in online communities of lesbians and gays although I could have done, because I was afraid of being out myself as a lesbian. To advertise my research, it was necessary to reveal what my research was about, where I study and what I am in terms of my sexual identity. If I introduced myself as a heterosexual

researcher, no one would have been interested in the advertisement as I would not have been an insider. But if I introduced myself as a lesbian researcher, some people would search for me on the homepage of the University of York, and then my identity could easily be revealed to strangers. Although I could hide some private information about myself and advertise for participants on online sites for lesbians and gays, I did not want to take this risk. However, I advertised on one gay online community, namely *Ivan City*[22] in August and September, because I had not obtained enough gay participants through snowballing and asking friends of friends by August.

When I received phone numbers or email addresses of prospective participants from my friends, I first sent them a text message thanking them for their interest in my research and asking them whether I could call or email them to explain my research in detail. In the first text message, I did not ask when they would be available for an interview because I did not want to pressure them. Most interviews were arranged following the email in which I had introduced myself and explained what my research was about and how the interview would work. However, I removed the information that this research dealt with lesbian and gay issues, when I sent this email to a heterosexual participant (Ken) who might have felt uncomfortable with it. It was in part because I did not want him to feel embarrassed, and partly because I did not want to take the risk that he might cancel the interview. I emphasized the ethical framework of the research: the consent form, that the recorded interview materials and transcriptions would only be accessible to me as researcher and my supervisor; that confidentiality and anonymity were also guaranteed, including in relation to their partner when both partners in a couple had agreed to an interview; that they had the right to pass over questions that they felt uncomfortable with; and that they could withdraw their interview data. Moreover, I stressed that although I wanted to interview both partners in a couple, the interviews would be conducted separately and the interview content would never be leaked to their partner by me, the researcher. I informed the participants that I would not tell them about their partner's interview content and also that they might be able to recognise what their partner said in the interview by matching their own stories, which is beyond the

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[22] Ivan City is one of the biggest online gay communities in Korea (see http://www.ivancity.com/).

researcher's control (see Peters et al. 2008). I did not give them a full list of interview questions as I did not want them to prepare beforehand. However, I had to give this list to some gay participants (Leslie and Jeongyol) who were reluctant to take part without knowing the details of the interview questions, due to the fact that they had already had a few bad interview experiences that were contrary to what they had expected from their interviews with some journalists. I understood their situation and gave a brief version of the interview questions, explaining that my research was not intended to harm them, but to uncover untold stories, and that I as a researcher wanted the interviewees to respond spontaneously.

As this research was not funded, I informed the participants that I could not provide monetary reward, but would cover all drinks and cakes during the interviews. In general, a voucher (about 10 to 25 pounds) is offered in most academic interview situations in Korea. Instead, I gave them a small package of shortbread that I had brought from York. Finally, I asked them when they were available and where they would feel comfortable to be interviewed. I always arranged an interview time they wanted and let them decide on an interview place. As Herzog (2012) notes, the interview location is one of the main concerns and interviewees tend to feel more comfortable and secure in a familiar place. The actual interview places were diverse, ranging from cafés and private meeting rooms near the interviewees' offices or houses, their offices, their houses to cars and even a campsite. The two latter interview places (car and campsite) took place accidentally and will be described later in detail under *Doing the Actual Interviews*. I let the participants know that the interview would take about an hour or so. Amongst 35 interviews, the shortest was the interview with Anna which took 00:17:43 and the longest one was with Bud (02:55:42). I recorded a total of 52:55:53 hours and the interviews took on average 01:30:44 hours.

2-2-1. Sample Composition

In total, I interviewed 23 couples and altogether forty participants: twelve heterosexual participants (from seven couples), eighteen lesbians (from nine couples) and ten gays (from seven couples). Afterwards, however, I decided not to include

five cases in my study for various reasons.[23] Consequently, seven heterosexual couples (twelve participants), seven lesbian couples (fourteen participants) and six gay couples (nine participants) were finally included (Table 1).

Table 1. List of Interviewees

No	Straights		Lesbians		Gays	
	Female	Male				
1	Sunyoung	Sarang	Soran	Ray	Kenneth	
2	Shim	Pony	Lime	Agasa	Bud	
3	Yuyu		Basa	Ed	Jeongyol	
4	Sinbi	Cogito	Jinny	Namul	Jaekyoung	Ahn
5		Ken	Mim	Choikang	Garam	Dio
6	Ahreum	Dongchi	Tina	Anna	Leslie	Jinseok
7	Alice	Wonseok	Hosu	Penni		

Source: Interview data (2012).

All names used in Table 1 are pseudonyms created by the participants. As mentioned earlier, the ethical issues dealing with confidentiality and anonymity were discussed and explained to the participants in the information sheet and consent form. For the pseudonyms, in particular, I fully explained to the participants how they would be used in the thesis and why this was important and necessary. Nevertheless, some participants working as activists or who already had their nickname in the communities where they 'belong' (in their terms) insisted on using either their real name or their nickname. I understood their desire to be represented in the thesis as their 'real' selves by revealing their real name (or identifiable nickname) and it seemed to me that they wanted to show that there is nothing to be afraid of. Also, there were some participants who seemed not to care about whether I used their real name or nickname,[24] because the thesis would be published in the first instance in the United Kingdom and in English. Although I was slightly concerned about some participants who might be recognised by their friends or acquaintances, I decided to

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[23] The five cases were two lesbian couples and one gay participant: Suhee and Jiae (lesbian), Jina and Rehai couple (lesbian) and Sunryool (gay). Suhee and Jiae were interviewed together and there were many interruptions. Jina and Rehai were not actually living together, but almost living together, which means they had separate houses and stayed together most days. Sunryool was the last gay participant I could find. He was about to start cohabiting a week from the day I interviewed him. He was obviously not cohabiting at the time of the interview and had no previous cohabiting experiences. Therefore I excluded him from my data.

[24] There is a tendency that people who work as activists or for NGOs prefer a nickname because they want to have a name they want/like, not a given name from their paternal grandparents. Also, lesbians and gays tend to have a nickname to protect themselves from being detected or suspected by the others, particularly when they join an (online or offline) community.

respect the participants' desire to have an identifiable name in this study because I sensed that they also wanted to be out in this research as did I. Additionally, I would like to clarify that all the participants in my research are Korean. The reason why I try to make this clear is that there are several English-sounding names such as Kenneth and Tina, but they are merely some participants' chosen pseudonyms.

Table 1 shows that both partners of all seven lesbian couples were interviewed, whereas two partners among the seven heterosexual couples and three partners among the six gay couples were not interviewed. There were various reasons why I could not always interview both partners. For example, first, Yuyu said in her interview that her partner was very shy and he was busy working, but this turned out to be only a partial reason. I met Shim and Yuyu (they were friends, and Yuyu introduced Shim to me) by chance at a conference after the interviews, and Shim told me that she did not cohabit with Pony any longer. After the interview, Pony proposed marriage to Shim and Shim declined. Then they agreed to live separately, keeping their couple relationship and having time to think whether marriage was necessary. Then, Yuyu said that 'I knew! After the interview, I thought it might impact negatively on my partner, because he's also basically keen on getting married. That's why I didn't encourage him to get into the interview' (Fieldwork notes, 24 August 2012). Second, Ken did not even tell his girlfriend that he was going to do an interview about their cohabitation, because he expected that his girlfriend would not let him do the interview if she came to know about it. He said: 'You know, she's a woman. She doesn't like anyone knowing that we're cohabiting' (Fieldwork notes, 3 April 2012). Third, I met Bud and Kenneth through Ivan City and they simply refused their partner's involvement because they did not want their partner to be exposed to a stranger. Fourth, Jeongyol asked his partner to do an interview and he consented. Due to him owning a new business and illness, however, Jeongyol's partner could not arrange a time.

As can be seen from Table 1, I did not gain as many gay interviewees as I had initially planned. There were two reasons for this. First, according to my gay participants, there were not many gays cohabiting with their partner. I shall discuss this in more detail later in the analysis chapters. Second, since I had never had any gays as friends in my life, this influenced my ability to find gay participants. It was

not that I did not want to know gays, but that I did not have a chance to meet them. Almost all my social connections with people are based on feminist and lesbian contacts. Moreover, most of my friends and acquaintances do not have friendships with gays either. Only Ed knew Garam, and she introduced Garam to me. After the interviews with Garam and his partner, Garam introduced Jaekyoung, Leslie and Jeongyol to me, and then I was able to additionally interview Ahn (Jaekyoung's partner) and Jinseok (Leslie's partner), and Jinseok introduced Sunryool to me. However, that was it. To sum up, I did not have any contact with gays, and had only a few recommenders (Ed, Garam and Jinseok). Although I advertised for gay participants in a gay online community (Ivan City) and gained two more participants (Kenneth and Bud) there, I did not get to interview twelve participants as planned. Nevertheless, as Mason (2002) suggests, what is important about the sample size in qualitative research is not how many participants a researcher has recruited, but how much knowledge the researcher can elicit from the data s/he has collected and how well the researcher can represent participants' lives and voices. Patton (2002: 230, emphasis in original) also defends this, stating that 'the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich-cases* for study in depth'. This is what I sought to do.

The age range of the participants varied (Table 2). Interestingly, over half of the heterosexual and lesbian participants were in their early 30s (category of 30-34) whereas most of gay participants were in their late 30s or over 40.

Table 2. Range of Participants' Age

Age	Straights	Lesbians	Gays	Total
Over 40	1	1	4	6
35 - 39	2	3	3	8
30 - 34	7	7	1	15
Less than 30	2	3	1	6

Source: Interview data (2012).

The age distribution in my sample may partly be due to the fact that a few friends of mine, who are of a similar age as myself,[25] helped me to find heterosexual and lesbian participants by introducing their friends, while only two people (Ed and

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[25] I belong in the '30-34' category.

Garam) were involved in recruiting gay participants. In other words, my own age might have affected the participants' age range. More importantly, I noticed in the interviews with gay participants that most (young) gays are likely to be reluctant to live together with their boyfriend, because gays tend to keep their personal space and time, and they may resist being 'in a relationship' with someone. Hence, Korean young gays' resistive attitude to cohabitation might have impacted on the concentration of participants in the age '35-39' and 'over 40' cohort.

The length of cohabitation also varied (Table 3). I purposively recruited participants with various cohabitation lengths. The numbers in Table 3 indicate the number of couples, not the number of participants, because in some couples both partners were interviewed and in others not, and the disparity could over-emphasize a certain cohort.

Table 3. Length of Cohabitation

Length	Straights	Lesbians	Gays	Total
Over than 7 years			2	2
6 – 7 years		1	1	2
5 – 6 years	1		1	2
4 – 5 years	3			3
3 – 4 years		2		2
2 – 3 years	2	1	1	4
1 – 2 years		1	1	2
Less than 1 year	1	2		3

Source: Interview data (2012).

The average length of cohabitation was 3.5 years for heterosexual couples, 2.64 years for lesbian ones, and 5.17 years for gays, in some ways possibly the opposite of what one might expect. However, this difference might be explained both by opportunity structures (heterosexuals can marry, lesbians and gays cannot) and by the fact that the gays I interviewed were older on average than those in the other two cohorts.

All participants were in cohabitation relationships when they were interviewed, most of whom were in their first cohabitation relationship with no previous experience. For most participants, the current cohabiting relationship was the first one, while it

was the second experience for half of the lesbian participants and one straight participant had had three previous cohabiting relationships (Table 4).

Table 4. Numbers of Previous Cohabitation Experiences by Participant

No.	Straights	Lesbians	Gays	Total
0	10	7	7	24
1	1	7	2	10
2	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	0	1

Source: Interview data (2012).

This may signify that lesbians have more desire for and less worries and resistance to cohabiting with their partner than heterosexual and gay couples. This finding also emerged in the interview data and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The education level of my interviewees was relatively high compared to the national average[26] (Table 5). Two participants were currently doing a PhD, but had not completed it yet. Three among the seven participants in the Master's group were in the process of completing their Masters and the rest had completed it. One participant in 23 participants in the Bachelor group (4-year university degree) had dropped out of a school. The vocational college level means that this person graduated with a 2-year degree.

Table 5. Participants by Educational Level

Education Level	Straights	Lesbians	Gays	Total
PhD	1	1	0	2
MA	4	1	2	7
BA	6	10	7	23
Vocational College	1	2	0	3

Source: Interview data (2012).

Table 5 illustrates that over a fourth of participants had a postgraduate qualification. This was the opposite result from some of the existing literature arguing that the lower the education level, the greater the tendency to cohabit (see Reinhold 2010).

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[26] According to OECD (2014c), approximately 97% of the Korean adults (aged 25 to 44) completed the high (upper secondary) school level and 59% of the population completed the university or postgraduate (tertiary education) level in 2012.

So far, this chapter has dealt with my research design, my feminist perspective and the sample composition. Now, I turn to look at the actual interviews: how the interviews were prepared, how the interview questions were generated, what happened during the interviews and how I overcame unexpected situations. Then, this chapter will discuss the post-interview processes such as transcribing, translating and data analysis.

2-3. Doing the Actual Interviews

A central interest of this study was to hear the articulated experiences of those who are currently cohabiting with their girlfriend/boyfriend/partner,[27] and furthermore to understand the meanings of the lives of Korean unmarried cohabiting couples. Nevertheless, I would like to note that 35 participants cannot be representative of the population of cohabiting couples in Korea as a whole (see Mason 2002). My research therefore produces a qualitative picture of the reported experiences of the particular people I interviewed. It does not aim to be representative. To conduct the fieldwork, I created a consent form (see Appendix 1), interview questions (see Appendix 2), an information sheet (see Appendix 3) about me as a researcher and the research itself, and a participants' demographic questionnaire (see Appendix 4). In the information sheet, I emphasized ethical matters such as confidentiality and anonymity so that participants could feel safe in talking about their private lives to a stranger. The consent form was sent to the participants in advance, and was prepared in two languages, Korean and English. The demographic questionnaire asked for ten pieces of information: gender, birth year, when they started the current cohabitation, the number of previous cohabitation experiences, current residence area (Seoul or Kyungki), types of residence (monthly rent, yearly rent or owned), profession, annual wage, the highest education level and the number of rooms in the house. All questions were answered, except for Basa who did not want to include her annual wage information.

The interview questions were carefully generated in order to achieve 'comparability' (Arksey and Knight 2012: 94), to avoid prejudicial language, ambiguity, imprecision,

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[27] Participants on the whole referred to their partner in three ways: girlfriend/boyfriend, name (or nickname) or partner.

leading questions, double-barrelled questions, assumptive questions and hypothetical questions (see also Silverman 2000; Kvale 2007). Questions were mostly asked in chronological order following the lifecycle of a relationship. For example, I started with a warm-up question such as 'how did you meet your partner?' and then moved on to 'how did you start cohabiting with her/him?' and 'I'd like to hear how it went. How was it in the beginning?' After having a conversation about the beginning of the cohabitation and experiences of living together, I asked for their perceptions of cohabitation and what they thought about the public views on cohabitation in Korea. Before interviewing the participants, I always prepared myself to be a careful and active listener. As Hesse-Biber (2007) and many others (Wengraf 2001; Mason 2002; Kvale 2007; Arksey and Knight 2012; Liamputtong 2013) argue, it is key for a researcher to be a careful listener who hears what the participant says, probes, nods and actively reacts to the interviewee's visual and verbal cues, gestures and eye contact. I worked to achieve this.

If I am asked to describe in one sentence what the interviews were like, I would answer: 'full of unexpected events'. By this I do not only mean what the participants talked about during the interviews but also how each interview was carried out and what happened before and after the interviews. The first unexpected event was that I lost some transcriptions at the beginning of my fieldwork. I tried to transcribe the interview data as soon as possible after each interview as Wengraf (2001) suggests, but when I had completed three transcriptions, my laptop broke down. Fortunately, the recorded interview files were saved on my smartphone and they were fine. But I could not restore most files on my laptop and the three transcriptions were gone. After that, I saved every file related to the fieldwork in four ways: in my laptop hard drive, in a USB, in Dropbox and Google Drive. The last two are online storage facilities so there is no risk of data loss due to hardware malfunction.

The more I interviewed, the more I encountered unexpected events. When I interviewed Jinny for example, she asked me to join her for dinner after the interviews with her and her partner (I was supposed to interview Jinny first, and then Namul). The three of us had dinner together, drinking and chatting. By the time we were all a bit drunk, Jinny said to me:

You asked me to introduce some more couples for your interview, didn't you? I know a couple of friends living together. But honestly, I'm not sure whether they would be willing to join your interview. The only reason I agreed to participate in your interview was because of Heyu.[28] She said that you're a good, hard-working person and worth getting to know. But my friends in the community I run have no idea about you and there is no reason why they should help your interview, is there? Why don't you join our trip this weekend? You'll have fun with the community members and be able to get participants, I guess. Come on, join us! (Fieldwork notes, 25 April 2012)

As a community manager, she arranged trips twice a year, once in the summer and the other in the winter. The summer trip that year was on 28 April and it was an overnight trip. I could not refuse her thoughtful suggestion and went on the trip. It was great fun and I met many lesbian couples as she said. However, I was surprised when I heard from them that only two couples were living together among the 23 members (ten couples and the rest were single) who came on the trip. The reasons for not living together varied; some liked to keep their personal time and spaces, some were still living with their parents who would not allow them to live independently before marriage and some mentioned the lack of money to rent a house or that their relationship had begun very recently and they had not thought about cohabitation yet. After the trip, I was able to interview only one couple, because the other couple was seriously reluctant to talk about their private stories and have them published.

The couple (Suhee and Jiae) who agreed to take part in my research after the trip were also friends of Heyu and they briefly mentioned that they had decided to be interviewed because of Heyu, not because of me. At the time, I realised how important a recommender is and that the degree to which I had a good relationship with the recommender would influence consent to an interview as well as the interview contents. That is, the closer the relationship between recommender and participants and the relationship between the recommender and the researcher, the

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[28] Heyu introduced Jinny to me. Jinny has run a lesbian online community for about eight years and Heyu was a member of the community. They had known each other for about seven years and had a very close friendship (Fieldwork notes, 25 April 2012).

safer the participants felt and the friendlier they were towards me, the researcher. However, I had to exclude the interview data afterwards, although I was invited to their house and interviewed them. They were about ten years older than me and did not follow my requirement that the couple interview should be conducted separately. In Korean culture, a younger person cannot insist that older people follow something that the younger person suggests, and there were interruptions and discussions several times between them during the interview. Although I kept trying to persuade them to be interviewed separately and asked Suhee to stay in her room for a while, Suhee refused, saying that 'you know, my room is just there. I can hear what you're talking about anyhow if I want to. It's useless. Let's just do it.' (Fieldwork notes, 8 June 2012). After the interview, as always, I asked them whether they knew other couples living together. Suhee said 'yes' and immediately called someone, briefly explaining my research and asking whether they would be available for an interview on the day. After the phone call, Suhee said that they had agreed to this interview and took me there. That is how I met Anna and Tina. I heard from Suhee that they had recently started their own business, a café, and she took me to there.

Both Anna and Tina seemed embarrassed and busy. Tina was cooking something ordered by a customer and Anna was talking to her business partner. Another unexpected situation occurred soon with Anna. Anna said to me that she had started her own business with her girlfriend as a business partner only the previous week and worried in case any customers overheard what we said. After looking around the café to find a place for the interview, she asked me whether interviewing in a car would be alright. I answered 'of course, it's no problem' because I expected that it would be fine, despite the hot weather, as long as we could open the windows. However, she did not want to open the window as she was worried that passersby might overhear what we said, find out that she was a lesbian and that this would impact negatively on her business. Although we did the interview in hot weather with unopened windows, she kept glancing at passersby walking along the street and hurrying me to ask her the next question. Due to her sense of pressure, the interview finished in 17 minutes 43 seconds and it was the shortest interview. After the interview, both of us were soaked in sweat. Later, I was fortunately able to interview her partner, Tina, on the terrace of the café, as there were no customers there. The interview with Anna made me realize how much she worried about her sexuality being found out.

In addition to this sauna-like interview experience, I had another surprising interview on a campsite. I was invited to a camp organised by my friend and her social network members, of whom Sunyoung was one. My friend who introduced Sunyoung to me suggested that I come on the trip to the campsite before my interview with Sunyoung to get to know each other, and I agreed. I met two more people as well as Sunyoung and we had great fun at the campsite, eating, drinking and chatting together. One of them asked me about my research, and we all discussed and shared ideas about my research. Meanwhile, Sunyoung suddenly asked me whether she could be interviewed right there as she had wanted to talk about her past stories openly for a long time. I reminded her of the issue of confidentiality and anonymity. I showed her the consent form I had and she signed it. The rest also agreed not to interrupt while the interview proceeded. Wherever I went, I always took several consent forms, the interview questions and the demographic questionnaire with me, and thus she was informed enough before the interview and it went very well without any interruptions as if there were no others there, but just the two of us. Though the interview was done at an unplanned moment, I felt that Sunyoung expressed her experiences of cohabitation in the past and present readily, and the interview was very cheerful and simultaneously serious. She said after the interview:

> I feel like I was healing during the interview. I was very surprised at myself talking about something I've never talked to others. I don't know how the one hour went so quickly. I enjoyed it very much and hope my rich past experiences will help your research! (Fieldwork notes, 12 July)

As well as the interview location, I faced a different unexpected event in which I was interviewed by a journalist who was preparing an article about (heterosexual) unmarried cohabiting couples in Korea. She asked me:

> How have you met and interviewed such people? Do they have a job? Have they graduated from university? What kind of people are they? […] Are there many gays and lesbians cohabiting with their partner? Do they make as much money as *normal* people? … By the way, how did you actually meet them? (Fieldwork notes, 12 June 2012)

The quotation above is an extract from an interview conducted by the journalist who was interested in my fieldwork. This story goes back to early June 2012. I had a phone call from a journalist from the *Kyunghyang Daily News* on 5 June, and she requested an interview about my fieldwork. She said that she had heard about my research from her acquaintance, a professor (whom I had never met nor known before) at one of the Korean universities, and my research was already quite well known in Korean academe because it was an interesting focus on a sensitive issue and had not been studied. Requesting an interview on the phone, she asked me to bring my interview data, transcriptions and information about participants for her follow-up interview. She said, she wanted to write an article about cohabiting couples and asked me to help her. I firmly refused her request, and only accepted an interview, mentioning research ethics. I met her in a café on 12 June, and the questions quoted above were what she asked me at the very beginning of the interview. She showed very narrow and heteronormative views throughout the interview, although she kept saying that she wanted to write an article to support cohabiting couples. Being interviewed by the journalist, I was able to see how extensively heteronormative ideas are spread in Korea and I also saw how a heterosexual person demarcates the boundary between 'normal' people and others. In addition, I experienced the hierarchical relation between the journalist and myself in the interview. Boasting about her profession, the journalist demanded that I give her my interview data, transcriptions and participants' information. She even warned me that a favourable article about cohabiting couples that might help public views improve would not be published in the newspaper if I did not provide her with the interviewees' information such as their phone numbers or email addresses. I refused her request and finished the interview quickly, taking less than one hour. This interview made me aware that an individual like me could feel uncomfortable and even frightened in a top-down interview setting where an interviewer is only keen on collecting as much data as possible from an interviewee. From this experience I learnt how an interview with a certain perspective and approach can change the relation between an interviewer and an interviewee and why my feminist stance is important.

Although I was considerably embarrassed by the journalist, Jeongyol (one of my gay participants) might be the one who surprised me the most in his interview. Garam introduced Jeongyol to me after his own interview, and let me know that Jeongyol worked in an organisation for LGBT human rights. However, Jeongyol cancelled and postponed the interview four times. I simply thought he was busy, and accepted his request to change the interview dates. We met on 25 July, about three weeks after the first contact on 2 July. At the beginning of the interview, he apologised to me for postponing the interview date several times and explained why he had to do so. He told me that his partner was HIV-positive, and thus he needed time to discuss with his partner the extent to which he could disclose their cohabiting life stories. After his partner's consent, Jeongyol also needed time to think about the information which he would reveal in the interview. I understood why he had delayed the interview several times, but then I realised that I was unprepared and unsure how to react to such a sensitive issue (being HIV-positive). I was not embarrassed by the fact of HIV itself but worried in case I chose the wrong words to indicate issues related to HIV or AIDS. I was not confident in dealing with such issues because I had no prior experience of dealing with HIV/AIDS issues. Hence, I listened carefully to the words he used when he referred to HIV and AIDS, and tried to use the same words and expressions. Right after the interview, I wrote what I felt and thought about the interview with Jeongyol in my fieldwork notes:

> At the beginning of the interview with Jeongyol I complained in my mind about why Garam hadn't let me know beforehand about the fact that Jeongyol's partner was HIV-positive. But then I felt ashamed for blaming him that he didn't tell me. Rather, I should've thanked him for introducing Jeongyol to me and it's only natural he didn't tell me about it. Am I qualified enough to identify myself as a feminist? He shared his very private stories with me. How can I analyse and deal with this honest data? Or, perhaps am I giving too much meaning to this interview, only because it's involved in the HIV issue? Oh, it's too complicated…
> (Fieldwork notes, 25 July 2012)

Although interviewing a stranger (whether with or without issues such as HIV) who I never met before was obviously challenging, I realised later that interviewing

someone I had known for long (or for a short period) was also unexpectedly and surprisingly challenging. This is discussed next.

2-3-1. Interviewing Friends and Acquaintances

I did not anticipate that there would be different types of atmosphere when interviewing participants whom I first met for an interview and interviewing my friends and acquaintances until I interviewed Alice and Lime. As mentioned earlier, I discovered that the closer the relationship between a recommender and participants and the relationship between the recommender and a researcher, the safer and friendlier the participants seem to feel towards the researcher. However, there is more to the relationship dynamics between the researcher and the researched, and this became clear when I was on my way to interview Alice. A brief memo written in my fieldwork notes before interviewing Alice illustrates what I felt and wondered about:

> I feel strange going to interview Alice with a recorder. This time, I have
> to be very careful about asking and covering all the questions prepared,
> because I could just pass over some things that I already know about her.
> The interview shouldn't be too informal nor too fun. How… should I set
> myself up, formal or just behave in the way I'm used to with her?
> (Fieldwork notes, 20 June 2012)

I had known Alice for twelve years and had a close friendship. Even after I came to study abroad in England, we often talked and chatted on Skype. Consequently, she already knew what my research was about and had agreed to take part in an interview from the very beginning of my PhD. Yet, I tried to explain again to her what my research was about and gave her the consent form to obtain her official agreement. I followed exactly the same process I had with the other participants. Additionally, I told her before we started the interview that 'I might ask you things that you already told me and I know. You know, even if I know much about your cohabitation relationship, I need the information on paper, not in my mind. So, please don't feel strange when I ask you things I already know. Ok?' She answered, 'Yes, got it. I'm ready. Let's get started!' (Fieldwork notes, 20 June 2012). We both used honorific

language[29] throughout the interview, though we sometimes used informal language particularly when we talked about some funny stories or her former cohabiting experience.[30] The interview went much better than I had expected. My worry that the interview would be too informal turned out to be groundless. The interview proceeded, thoughtfully and rather seriously in a friendly setting. Afterwards, I found that the 'friendly' exchange I had had with Alice was not similar to the 'friendly' exchange I had had with other participants whom I met for the first time. Although I always aimed to establish a good rapport and be friendly with the participants, I have to admit that the two types of interviews, with friends and with strangers, were different. I do not, however, think that the interviews with friends were more valuable or better than the interview with strangers. Instead, I would argue that interviewing friends is as valid as interviewing participants who do not have a pre-existing relation with the researcher. As Harris (2002) points out, interviewing friends or acquaintances has been under-evaluated and is often seen as inappropriate for researching because of the possibility of failing to elicit information that a researcher already knows or the possibility that a respondent might tailor answers to match her/his friend researcher's ultimate intention (see also Glesne and Peshkin 1992). From my experience of interviewing Alice, however, such negative possibilities can be mediated in advance through the researcher's preparation and the friend interviewee's cooperation.

I had another interview with a friend, Lime. During and after the interview with Lime, I found that a different degree of friendship may create a different kind of 'friendly' interview. I had known Lime for about eight years, but have not kept in contact as much as I had with Alice. Unlike Alice, Lime hardly knew about my research, but only that I had been studying in England. Although she was always kind to me, there were certain differences from Alice. For example, she made much effort to answer fully and long, talking about whatever she thought relevant because she wanted to help me. Even if she seemed lost at some point or not to understand

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[29] Alice and I used honorifics. There are two types of language in Korea: one is 'casual' language used for talking to friends or younger people, and the other is 'honorific' language used for talking in a formal setting or to older people.
[30] Alice had a cohabiting relationship for about three years before her current partner, Wonseok. However, she had an affair with Wonseok whom she met on a blind date (this blind date was set up by one of Alice's colleagues, as her previous cohabiting relationship was unknown to everyone except a couple of her close friends including me) and this was revealed to her former cohabitee.

the question properly, she kept talking and often stopped to ask: 'Am I doing alright?' (Fieldwork notes, 23 June 2012), while Alice asked me directly when she was not sure about a given question, saying 'it sounds a bit vague. Can you explain it in another way?' (Fieldwork notes, 20 June 2012).

After these two friendly interviews, I realised two distinctive features of interviews with friends compared to interviews with strangers. Firstly, interviewing friends or acquaintances requires a researcher to prepare a strategy that should be agreed with the researcher's friend participants that the interview aims to cover the interview questions designed in advance even if is the answers are already known to the researcher. Secondly, as Harris (2002: 47) indicates, the 'level of friendship' or the amount of knowledge shared by the researcher and the researched can influence the interview atmosphere and the interactions between the two friends or acquaintances.

2-3-2. The Researcher's Positionality: Insider and Outsider

Drawing on my experience during my fieldwork, being an insider in the lesbian community was definitely beneficial in establishing rapport with interviewees from the very beginning. It helped participants to keep talking willingly as well as accessing participants and obtaining their consent to be interviewed in the first place, as many researchers note (Israel and Hay 2006; Hesse-Biber 2007; Kvale 2007; Letherby 2011; Savin-Baden and Major 2013). I was recognised as an insider by my lesbian participants, as I am a lesbian and have a partner. Although I met almost all lesbian participants (except for Lime and Agasa) for the first time at their interviews, most seemed to feel comfortable with me and I also felt comfortable with them. It may be partly because they had good and long relations with either the recommenders who were friends of mine or my partner or both in some cases, for example Soran, Ed, Mim and Hosu.

I also used a specific strategy to become a more trusted insider by telling every participant that 'I'd like to live together with my partner soon just like you. I think I can learn lots of things about cohabiting with a partner from you today.' In addition, when I was not sure whether I had covered all the questions and needed to check the question sheet, I said to them that, 'I feel like creating a kind of manual for how to live together with a partner. I'm sorry, I'm checking with what to ask you next. Once

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I start interviewing, I always forget that I'm a researcher and just fall into participants' stories. Would you allow me to check the question sheet?' I told them this not only because I felt it, but also because I wanted to remind them that I was interested in and loved to hear their experiences as a prospective cohabitant rather than just as a researcher. With lesbian participants, the fact that I was not then cohabiting with my partner was one of the prominent differences, and I attempted to fill the gap by trying to use the strategies as mentioned above.

Another difference I considered important was that I am a student studying abroad. Korean students studying in England are often seen as posh and smart in Korea. This might have put some participants off. Hence, I was always very cautious about choosing words,[31] wearing non-branded clothes and shoes, creating a balance between behaving formally and informally, and being neither too formal nor too informal. Moreover, I told them when it was relevant during an interview that I was very poor so that I had to work part-time all the time to pay my tuition fee and living expenses. This was intended to make the participants feel easy with me because I am not some rich person studying in England.

As an outsider, on the other hand, there were some challenges to access and interview gays and straights. Although I tried to show that I was an insider in many ways, there were obvious limits. Gays and straights seemed to see me as an outsider, at least initially. As briefly mentioned in the section on the *Recruitment of the Interviewees*, Leslie and Jeongyol for example, required more detailed research goals and questions because they already had negative interview experiences with other journalists and researchers, and it seemed to me that they initially considered me as an outsider, though they were suggested to me by a trusted insider, Garam. Kong et al. (2003: 101) claim that interviewing gay men's private lives involves diverse layers of subtleties and gays in many cases may ask a researcher about 'how intimate details will be used and represented' as well as more details about the researcher herself/himself. Furthermore, they argue that researchers trying to be insiders in a particular gay community so as to carry out successful recruitment are not

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[31] In general, many basic English words are adopted in Korea, for example computer, pen, coffee, bus etc. However, speaking too many English words could be seen as snobbish, especially when there are more general and alternative Korean words.

guaranteed to be identified as insiders and obtain enough participants. It is more important for researchers to construct proper 'ethical identities' in the community that may lead gay members in the community to see the researchers as 'trusted insiders (or trusted outsiders, as the case might be) who are not out to misrepresent them in their research write-ups' (Kong et al. 2003: 104). Here, one critical question is raised: is an insider status always necessary and advantageous, and an outsider status the opposite?

Hesse-Biber (2007) and many others (Alvesson and Ashcraft 2012; Liamputtong 2013; Savin-Baden and Major 2013) advocate that the outsider status can be advantageous to a researcher, because being an outsider indicates less knowledge about a specific research target group or individuals, and that means that the outsider researcher may be less likely to have biases towards the research objects. Moreover, Weiss (1994) emphasizes that an outsider status can actually permit a researcher to develop unique ideas and ask questions that could possibly be overlooked or never put by insiders. Conversely, but in a similar vein, Alvesson and Ashcraft (2012: 252) argue for 'certain dilemmas' with the insider status, such as the difficulty of asking questions without jeopardising the insider status.

These subtleties where a researcher attempts to achieve advantages from both the insider and outsider status occurred when I interviewed straights as well as gays. Initially, I found myself identifying as an outsider in relation to heterosexual participants. My fieldwork notes written about interviewing Sinbi and Cogito (first interviewees) show: 'Ooh, I'm so nervous. How should I deal with them? What do I have in common with them? Korean… interested in human rights, probably?' (Fieldwork notes, 30 March 2012). I think that almost all heterosexual participants (except Ken) knew or probably guessed my sexual identity, and thus they also seemed to consider me as an outsider on many levels, though I tried sisterly bonds with the female participants (Reinharz and Chase 2003) and made much effort to find things in common with the male participants, exhibiting good relations with their girlfriend or recommenders of the interviews. After each interview, particularly with heterosexual participants, I discovered some common reactions, for example 'Oh, I've never thought about that.' and 'You know, women in Korea […]' The former extract may imply that I was an outsider researcher who has an unbiased and unique

perspective towards heterosexual cohabiting couples, and the latter extract demonstrates that some recognised me as an insider in terms of sex, and the repeated phrase 'you know, …' often made it difficult for me to ask further questions, although I tried my best to ask them by slightly changing the format of the questions.

2-3-3. Complex Positionality: 'Insider with an Outsider Mask' and 'Outsider with an Insider Mask'

The matters of my insider and outsider status became problematic when I encountered a situation in which I needed to be clear about my sexual identity. Although I eventually decided to disclose my lesbian identity in this thesis, I was not sure about this when I was conducting my fieldwork, particularly when I interviewed someone who had no knowledge about my sexual identity. I kept asking myself whether I should tell the interviewee about me being lesbian, even during interviews. I was aware that, as Reinharz (1992: 34) points out, researchers' self-disclosure is crucial to practise reflexivity and achieve interaction with participants, but it could be problematic, for example making the researcher's position vulnerable by not only 'what is revealed' but also 'the very act of self-disclosure'. With this in mind, I intentionally did not recruit participants from lesbian/gay online communities because I was worried that if my social position as well as sexual identity was revealed to strangers, which would jeopardise my future career in Korea. However, I did advertise[32] on a gay online community (Ivan City) afterwards because I thought that my social position would be in less danger even if revealed there.

Yet, when I interviewed Bud whom I recruited from Ivan City, I was still concerned about whether to come out to a stranger who might be considered an insider in terms of sexual identity. In the advertisement I posted on the online community, I only described what my research was about and who I was looking to recruit for an interview, not explicitly mentioning my sexual identity. Unlike Kenneth, whom I also met on Ivan City and who recognized (or assumed) that I was lesbian from the beginning of the interview, Bud did not seem to be sure about my sexual identity. I noticed that from what he said, for example 'though I'm not sure whether you know

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[32] I uploaded almost the same version of the guidance that I emailed to my participants. The only information I removed in the advertisement on Ivan City was the 'name of university' where I study, the University of York.

many old gays or lesbians.' I could have said to him, for instance, that I do not know old gays and lesbians although I am lesbian. Instead, I just said to him, 'no, I don't'. I found that I was still uncomfortable with interviewing a stranger (Bud) and that I seemed to want to hide my sexual identity from him as long as I could because I was afraid that he would out me to the online community. I revealed my lesbian identity to him after the break during the interview and he asked me why I had not told him straightaway from the beginning. In order not to ruin the relation between me and him, I lied to him that I thought he already knew about it from my appearance and my research topic. In terms of sexual identity, I was actually closer to an insider position, rather than an outsider, although I attempted to be seen as an outsider. To put it differently, I was wearing an outsider mask to pretend that I was not lesbian although I was, and I term this 'an insider with an outsider mask'.

I also experienced the disguise of a positional mask when I interviewed Ken, but in an exactly opposite way. The excerpt below is from the interview with Ken.

> Ken: Why are you researching this unusual subject?
> Researcher: Well, there are several reasons as a researcher. […] And
> also, I'm a sort of a prospective cohabitant.
> Ken: Oh, do you have a boyfriend?
> Researcher: Ah, yes.

He was recommended by his past girlfriend who is a friend of mine and he never related to any feminist or queer issues (I gained this information during small talk before starting the interview). He was just an ordinary Korean man, that is, he presumably had no idea about lesbian and gay issues. As I was fully aware of the statement 'disclosure begets disclosure' (Jourard 1971: 27), I decided to strategically and selectively disclose and disguise myself to secure participants in order to forestall the possibility that they might not turn up for the interview and to protect myself from potential harm. In this context, I was deliberately wearing an insider mask although I was an outsider to him in terms of sexual identity. At the same time, however, I felt I was forced to wear such a mask to hide my lesbian identity from him.

Through the two interview experiences with Bud and Ken, I became aware of the complex researcher's positionality that goes beyond the dichotomy of insider and outsider by in/voluntarily putting on a mask to conceal my sexual identity. This complicated dilemma in the binary positionality between insider and outsider has been discussed by scholars from various disciplines (see Mullings 1999; Merriam et al. 2001; Dwyer and Buckle 2009). What is important in this is that the complex researcher's positionality needs to be understood not only by arguing that taking a position (whether either, both or none) within the dyadic setting can be problematic, but also by pointing out that a researcher's positionality can be falsified for securing an interview, its process and its outcome as well as for the sake of the researcher's safety.

Nevertheless, an ethical matter still remains in masking the researcher's positionality. The self-dis/closure issue made me think for quite a long time about the extent to which I should state my sexual identity and related issues in the thesis. I considered the confession of Blackwood (1995), who wrote in her field diary that she had to keep fabricating stories about a fiancé whom she was going to marry after her fieldwork, because she felt vulnerable in the area (rural Muslim Minangkabau village in West Sumatra, Indonesia) where she undertook her fieldwork, and she accepted that it can be problematic in research ethics terms as well as in the research process. Although it was the only option she felt she had, I would argue that it was also problematic in terms of reciprocal research and interactions with the participants (see also La Pastina 2006). Therefore, I eventually decided to include that I am a lesbian in my thesis. This is mainly because this study in fact originates from my personal anxiety, as noted at the very beginning of this thesis, but also because it seems to a large extent almost impossible to represent the data and the interactions between me as researcher and the researched properly in a reflexive and feminist way if I do not do this.

2-4. Post-Interview Processes: Transcribing, Translating and Analysing Data

All interview data were transcribed after the fieldwork, and they were saved in my personal laptop hard drive, in a USB stick, in Dropbox and Google Drive. As all participants and I spoke Korean they were transcribed in Korean and then translated into English. The interview data amounted to about 53 hours in total and 950 pages

(including translations) in A4. Listening and re-listening to the interview data in order to produce transcriptions for the study made me very familiar with my data. It took me about twelve hours to transcribe a one-hour interview at the beginning, but it got faster, taking me only four hours to transcribe a one-hour interview at the end. Although it was the most frustrating and painful task of all the stages of writing the thesis, there were vital benefits. Above all, transcribing interview data situated me into the place where I as researcher and participants sat and talked together. Transcribing allowed me to practise reflexivity, as Branley (2004) notes. Although many researchers have suggested that transcribing is a first step towards data analysis to familiarise the researcher herself/himself with the actual written data (see Wengraf 2001; Branley 2004; Byrne 2004), the process of transcribing was also part of the fieldwork as well as part of the analysis. In this sense, transcribing is the stage where a researcher needs to/can practise reflexivity. It is not a just tedious process, but should be done effectively. In relation to this, Wengraf (2001: 210) stresses 'transcribing creatively'. He argues that taking notes of ideas emerging during the transcribing process is very useful for preparing one's analysis. That is, transcribing is not a stage only for producing written data from verbal data, but it is also a stage where researchers can revisit the interview scenes and begin their analysis. With this in mind, I scribbled notes of ideas, codes and potential themes arising from each transcription and made a grid to visualise them. The more interview data I transcribed, the more concise categories and information I was able to add to the grid. As a result, six grids with 52 categories were created for each group of participants (heterosexual, lesbian and gay participants) and this was the basis for my analysis.

My task was complicated by having to translate the interviews from Korean into English. Temple and Young (2004) strongly criticise that much cross language research overlooks the significance of presenting the translation issue in research, and data are often delivered to readers as if both the researcher and the researched used the same language, probably English, even when research is on minority ethnic communities in Britain, for example. They further argue that it is particularly problematic when researchers adopt a qualitative reflexive paradigm and neglect considering the translation matter. As a matter of fact, however, the translation issue overwhelmed me after the transcribing stage. Not only matching Korean words to

English words, but also interpreting the whole context that is intimately intertwined with the culture, gave me a lot of trouble. As I came to Britain in my late 20s to study and had never been exposed to any other English-speaking locale before, my four-year stay in England still did not seem sufficient to enable me to translate properly with a comprehensive understanding of both cultures of Korea and Britain. I thus needed a strategy to translate transcriptions into English and decided to deploy both 'literal' and 'free' translation (Birbili 2000: 3). In general, the literal style is understood as word-by-word translating, whereas free style is designed to enable comprehension of the context. I mostly followed the literal way of translating because it would distort less what respondents said, and more importantly, it helps readers to see 'the foreign mentality better' (Honig 1997: 17). However, I frequently found that there were fundamental cultural differences as well as basic linguistic differences (such as expressions or idioms that did not match English ones or grammar differences) between Korean and English in terms of age (and social position) and addressing. First, as mentioned earlier, Korean basically has two types of language: the informal language and the honorific one. The former is a language to speak to a peer or younger people and the latter is a language to speak to superior or older people from a speaker's position. In other words, the Korean language is hierarchical in terms of one's age and social position. Some vocabularies and the verb forms are differently used in the informal and the honorific language. For example, '안녕' is a kind of friendly (informal) form of language, meaning 'hi', and its honorific form is '안녕하세요'. These changes apply to using all forms of verbs and tenses. In addition, there is a different way of addressing a person in Korean. It is common, when an older or superior person speaks to a younger or inferior person to use the younger person's name as the mode of address. Younger people however generally use relational expressions such as 'sister', 'brother'[33] etc. rather than addressing older people by their name. Also, there are a range of kinship terms and each status has a specific title in the family tree (Choi Jaeseok 1989), and thus it is not easy to translate the 'addressing'. For example, there are different specific terms referring to the older sister's husband (형부), the younger sister's husband (제부), the older brother's wife (형수), the younger brother's wife (제수씨), the husband's mother and father (시어머니, 시아버지) and the wife's mother and father (장모님,

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[33] Here, 'sister' and 'brother' mean 'older sister' and 'older brother' in Korean.

장인어른). In these cases, I employed the free style of translating in order to achieve 'conceptual equivalence' (Birbili 2000: 3). However, what is to be taken into consideration here is that the transcriptions should be read with an understanding of Korean culture, not just reading what the participants said that was translated by the researcher. Barrett (1992: 203) claims that 'meaning is constructed in rather than expressed by language'. To present the context of the specific Korean culture as well as the meaning of what my interviewees said, I translated the transcriptions to the best of my ability, trying to convey undistorted meanings as much as possible by adding footnotes where necessary. Putting all the downsides and cautions of translating data aside, I discovered a crucial benefit from this. By closely inquiring into cross-cultural meanings as well as the meanings themselves in transcriptions, I was able to practise reflexivity, not only about the text translated, but also about the ideas envisaged by my standpoint. In this sense, I cannot but agree with Kim Youngjeong (2012: 139-140) that 'translation is a key factor by which to show a writer's attitudes toward *otherness* and marginalised subjects' (emphasis in original). That is, translation cannot be neutral, but is subjective to some extent. The final point I would like to make is that I transcribed and translated everything myself, partly because I was aware of the fact that transcribing and translating data supports a researcher to become closer to the data. More importantly, I did it because the consent form agreed and signed with participants said that the interview data and transcripts would only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisor.

I used thematic analysis for analysing the data, considering its advantages: flexibility and the ability to highlight commonalities, differences and relationships across the data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Gibson and Brown 2009; Joffe 2012). I chose thematic analysis because it can be efficiently employed to 'reflect what was said' (Braun and Clarke 2006: 9). To embark on analysing, I made a grid based on notes made while transcribing and translating. It consisted of six headings (demographic information, getting into cohabitation, disclosing the relationship, experience of cohabitation as practice, experience of cohabitation as intimate relationship and perceptions of cohabitation) with 52 categories.

Then, I moved to creating codes in relation to the research questions and themes I sought for. To generate codes, I firstly re-read all the transcripts several times to

revisit the ideas and themes I had. Next, all transcripts in Word format were uploaded to NVivo 10. I decided to use the software due to the large volume of the interview data (Gibbs 2002; Bazeley and Jackson 2007). Here I want to highlight that I intentionally uploaded transcripts transcribed in Korean and English to NVivo. As mentioned earlier, all interview data were transcribed in Korean first, and then translated into English. All transcripts were separately saved in three forms; transcript in Korean only, transcript in English only and transcript, paragraph by paragraph, in Korean and English. The primary reason that I decided to read transcripts in both Korean and English was to minimize the loss and distortion of meanings due to the translation. A transcript in Korean itself can be seen as raw data to some extent, but a translated transcript is a filtered document, filtered by me as researcher. That is to say, it may be wrong to analyse directly the translated transcript because it does not remind me of the interview situation, atmosphere and interaction taking place between the participants and me. In contrast, from the transcripts in Korean I was able to 'hear' participants' voices and able to portrait the scenes where I was with the participants.

After uploading the transcripts transcribed in both languages, Korean and English, I created codes (nodes in NVivo) in all transcripts with a definition for each node. I first coded specific parts in the Korean transcript, and then the same parts but translated in English were coded with the same code name created in the Korean transcript. This was particularly useful because NVivo provides the user with the function to show and print out a specific code that occurs in all files. For example, I had a node named 'the meaning of home' that was coded where participants talked about their 'home or their views on home', and all phrases and sentences coded as 'the meaning of home' were printed out in Korean and English as coded with each file name (participants' pseudonym) on top. Although I used mainly three functions in NVivo: Node (for creating codes), Relationship (for bridging each code and sub-code by themes) and Word Frequency (for searching what words were repeatedly mentioned), I found it was very useful and efficient for dealing with nearly 1000 pages transcripts. As for coding in a qualitative study, however, some researchers (see Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Gibson and Brown 2009) point out that computer-assisted qualitative data analysis may cause losing context by fragmenting the data into numerous codes. In particular, Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 69) emphasize that

researchers have to place themselves into context to understand the whole text and to avoid 'the problem of decontextualization of text which is inherent in the code and retrieve method'. To overcome this pitfall, I frequently came back to the original transcripts and re-read them to revisit the whole text so that I hardly lost any context in the data.

I primarily explored three themes which emerged from the interview data: how the participants started cohabiting, the extent to which they disclosed the nature of their relationship and experiences of cohabitation. Codes generated in each theme became concise through reviewing and revising them. All segments coded were listed and networked under the main three research questions on the computer screen. This graphical display allowed me to conceptually analyse the data by looking at the commonalities, differences and relationships in the articulated experiences of my participants.

Conclusion

I began by discussing why I chose a feminist perspective for my research, and then explained the process through which I prepared and conducted my fieldwork, followed by the way in which I dealt with the interview data in terms of transcribing, translating and analysing. Importantly, I endeavoured to reflect on the relationship between the researcher and the researched in this chapter, particularly discussing the instances where I interviewed a stranger and where I interviewed a friend (or an acquaintance). I also carefully reflected on the researcher's positionality, namely, as insider or outsider, in relation to my participants. This reflection underpinned the necessity of the feminist perspective for my research and helped me with conceptualising the notion of 'insider with an outsider mask' and 'outsider with an insider mask'.

As a Korean lesbian who was a prospective cohabitant and who identified herself as a feminist, I chose feminist methodology for carrying out this research. Through this approach, I was able to reflect on myself as a researcher when interviewing my participants and when analysing the interview data after all the interviews. The reflection process was sometimes joyful, but sometimes very painful. When I read the interview transcripts, I had to face what they said, what they meant and what they

wanted to say out loud, and that often stopped me from reading the next page because I simply could not move on until I had had enough time to digest them in laughing, crying and sometimes just staring at the transcript doing nothing. Now I turn to my analysis chapters to examine the voices of Korean cohabiting couples.

CHAPTER 3. Entering Cohabitation

Introduction

As cohabitation in the west was emerging and became increasingly common from the 1970s, numerous researchers attempted to find reasons why people chose cohabitation over marriage. On a macro level, scholars noted that cohabitation became a strong rival to marriage when the sexual revolution took place in the west when using contraception and having abortions became available (Macklin 1972; Lyness, Lipetz and Davis 1972; Peterman, Ridley and Anderson 1974). The rise in cohabitation coincided with women's growing participation in the labour market (Ressler and Waters 1995; Lesthaeghe 2010), the beginning of the women's liberation movement (Lyness, Lipetz and Davis 1972) and the idea of individualism becoming prevalent (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990; Axinn and Thornton 1992). On a micro level, which is what I focus on in this chapter, love, convenience, housing issues, fiscal savings, cohabiting to test one's compatibility with a partner for future marriage and cohabitation as an alternative to being single have been investigated as primary reasons for entering into cohabitation (Macklin 1972; Henze and Hudson 1974; Trost 1975; Stafford, Backman and Dibona 1977; Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Kiernan 2004; Seltzer 2004; Manning and Smock 2005; Rhoades, Stanley and Markman 2009; Huang et al. 2011). Moreover, what 'kind' of people cohabit was also focused on in terms of religiosity, education, class, ethnicity, liberal attitudes and early experience of sexual practice (Clayton and Voss 1977; Yllo 1978; Macklin 1980; Newcomb and Bentler 1980; DeMaris and Leslie 1984; Booth and Johnson 1988; Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990). A number of studies that dealt with the reasons for and individual characteristics of those who cohabit demonstrate that cohabiting couples have been seen as deviant and that until fairly recently cohabitation was considered 'incomplete institution' (Cherlin 2004: 848, see also Nock 1995; Smock and Gupta 2002; Manning, Brown and Payne 2014), because fundamentally, marriage was viewed as the only institutionalized relationship for heterosexual couples and cohabitation was temporary informal and premarital, that is, it lacked institutionalization.

Therefore, it is important to understand why people, particularly young people, choose cohabitation when it is not very welcome compared to marriage. Sassler (2004) points out that literature on the process prior to actual cohabitation, for example where couples first meet, how they become a couple and the process of making a decision about living together, is scarce. She also criticises that the existing studies on the reasons for cohabitation tend to rely on quantitative methods such as questionnaires or surveys that have limitations in understanding how cohabiters view their relationship and how they perceive the meaning of the process prior to cohabitation. Manning and Smock (2005) also suggest that examining the early stages of cohabiting couples' relationship is important for understanding the cohabitation phenomenon affecting increasing numbers of young people. In this vein, I would argue that inquiring into the situation before cohabiting may be crucial to comprehending the context in which people enter cohabitation. Therefore, this chapter deals with cohabiting couples' early relationship phase, thus filling a gap in the research. Specifically, this chapter focuses on how people met their partner, how long couples were dating before cohabiting, what reasons impacted on entering into the cohabitation relationship and how they viewed the whole process.

3-1. Finding a Partner

As a researcher, I was initially curious to find out if cohabiting couples had looked for someone to live with when they met their girlfriend/boyfriend.[34] I therefore asked 'how did you meet your current cohabiting partner?' and 'did you ever consider cohabiting if you met someone before you met your partner?' Interestingly, all but two interviewees (Agasa and Mim) had no intention to cohabit before they met their current partner. On the contrary, almost all of my participants were keen to talk about 'where' they had met their current cohabitee and the 'where' was more important in the interviews with the lesbians and gays than for the heterosexuals. Hence, in this section I will discuss where people met their girlfriend/boyfriend and whether they had an initial plan to cohabit with the person they met.

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[34] This curiosity arose from the Korean custom '중매결혼' (marriage by family arrangement or a matchmaking company). Although this arranged marriage is now less prevalent than love marriage in Korea, the number of those who marry by arrangement is on rise (see Lee Nahee 2014). Those who first meet someone arranged by their family members or a matchmaking company can be understood to have the intention to marry. The question is whether or not cohabitation is premeditated in the same way.

3-1-1. Where People Meet Their Potential Partner

The places people met their potential romantic partner were diverse, with a distinctive difference between same-sex and different-sex couples in terms of places involved, especially regarding the internet (online community). The men in three gay couples out of six and the women from five lesbian couples out of seven met their current partner at either social gatherings or social clubs hosted by online communities or online chat rooms, whereas no heterosexual couples met on the internet or places arranged by online communities. With regard to meeting potential lovers on the internet, Rosenfeld and Thomas (2012: 533) argue that those who are in relatively 'thin dating markets' have a tendency to meet potential partners with the help of the internet. By 'thin dating markets', I mean limited opportunities to meet partners, as many of my homosexual participants pointed out that people cannot meet their potential romantic partner freely in public, but should situate themselves in a certain place where people can encounter those who identify as lesbian or gay. My finding here that lesbians and gays are likely to meet their partner online is consistent with existing Korean research on this (Joo Youngjoon and Youm Yoosik 2011; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014).

Meeting Online

'Meeting online' here implies that people met either in chatrooms or somewhere offline after the approval of an online membership to join a particular community or application to attend specific meetings. In other words, some participants first met their partner at a physical location but only once they had joined an online community who then held events offline. Consequently, social gatherings and social clubs hosted by online communities are dealt with in this section. These may not be seen as online meetings, but it is important to note that those meetings are only searchable online and can only be physically accessed after people join the online community and obtain the approval by the online community manager.

A gay couple (Jaekyoung and Ahn) met at a regular meeting hosted by an online community, called Chingusai. As an answer to the question 'how did you first meet your partner?', Jaekyoung (G, 41, w/Ahn)[35] said: 'You know, I can't see gays in

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[35] To help readers understand each participant in this thesis better, I indicate each participant's basic information, her/his sexual identity, age and partner's pseudonym (if involved).

daily life because I'm gay. I attended a regular meeting once at Chingusai and became an active member, then met Ahn there.' Jaekyoung mentioned the difficulty of meeting gay people in everyday life. This is why many gays and lesbians go to gay communities on the internet to meet people who identify themselves as homosexual. Similarly, Basa (L, 38, w/Ed) answered the question, 'how did you first meet your partner?' with:

> Of course, I met her at a social gathering. Where people like us can meet
> people is limited, isn't it? […] It's so limited here. In Korea… I met her
> at a Café because there is nowhere else to meet people. […] It is so
> obvious that it's the only way to meet people, why are you asking me
> about this?

Basa met her partner at a social gathering hosted by an online community, saying that places at which 'people like us' (meaning lesbians) can meet people are very limited. The term 'Café' in this context refers to an online site where she met her partner. Basa talked more about the Café:

> I'm not the kind of person who surfs this Café or that Café. Once I get
> into a certain Café, I tend to wait and see how it goes. It's just because
> I'm a bit cautious about this kind of Café. You know, I used to live in the
> countryside and thus I was quite afraid of joining a Café. So I'd watched
> the Café for about one year. Then as I got to know some people, I came
> to feel comfortable with the Café. Then, I met Ed there.

Basa decided to actually go to an event after she thought that the Café was safe for her based on her one-year observation. In other words, community-selection precedes partner-selection. This was also evident in the Ed's interview. In answer to the question 'how did you first meet your partner?', she said that 'while I didn't take part in community activities, I joined a good community in which people were hardly flirting with the others and tend to be polite, though it was a lesbian community. One day, the community hosted a "don't-ask-trip" and I just joined it. And I met Basa there.' The evaluative expressions such as 'good' and 'people were hardly flirting with the others and tend to be polite' show that certain factors influence people in

making the decision whether they join and stay in a certain online community, and further whether they actually go to an event hosted by the community.

Another lesbian couple (Jinny and Namul) also met at a gathering hosted by an online community, called 'Ieki'. Jinny (L, 46, w/Namul) described the Café as a 'political community' and 'the Café that my friend ran at the time and it was known as a good community'. This suggests that a 'good community' to Jinny meant being political to some extent and she might also have trusted the Café because her friend ran it at the time. She told me that she first met Namul at a community gathering. Afterwards she read through what Namul had posted in the online community:

> When I read postings Namul wrote on the Café, I felt she wrote very well. The writing style was candid. By the time when I had a good feeling for her, she appeared at the regular meeting in August and I looked at her carefully, trying to get her attention.

This implies that the characteristics of the Café and some posts Namul wrote on the Café as well as the person Namul herself made Jinny become interested in her. But here too the process of community-selection preceded partner-selection.

A gay couple, Dio and Garam first met at G-Voice[36] in Chingusai. Dio (G, 29, w/Dio) first joined Chingusai to take part in the choir, whereas Garam (G, 34, w/Dio) was already a long-term member who worried more about the club's performance than the new member Dio. There is a little difference between Dio's and Garam's stories about their first encounter. As an old member at G-Voice, Garam described the relationship development thus:

> I was a member at G-Voice in Chingusai and he joined the club around February 2010. I came on to him first and then he came to me. […] I guess both of us had a good feeling about each other from the beginning. But the Autumn Performance of G-Voice was already set and I was worried about it in case we broke up before the performance and it would

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[36] G-Voice is a social choir group in Chingusai.

affect it negatively. Often, new members stop coming after a break up and thus I usually approach new members very carefully. I intended to become a couple with him after the performance, but it happened more quickly than I expected.

In contrast to Garam who first saw Dio at the choir club, Dio first saw Garam on photos on the Chingusai homepage before actually meeting him. Dio said:

As many others would be the same as me, I was afraid of going to Chingusai. You know, until really stepping into the community. So, I looked through the homepage to see what kind of people there were. […] There were photos in the gallery folder in the Chingusai homepage and there was someone who caught my eye. It was Garam and I met him there. That is, I already had a good feeling before the first G-Voice meeting and then went to the club and met him.

The pre-screening of the online community was very important. As for how Dio came to join the club, he said: 'there was no community I was involved in before. I liked singing and searched for a community where I could share my hobby. Meanwhile, I got to know G-Voice and became a member.' He selected the community first so that he could share his hobby with others. In other words, he had no intention to cohabit at the point when he joined.

Two lesbian couples (Mim and Choikang, and Soran and Ray) met their partner at Swing Sisters. The swing dance club 'Swing Sisters' is fundamentally based on the feminist idea that the stereotype that only men can be leaders and women should be followers in swing dance has to be broken so that women willing to lead their swing dance partner can have the chance to do this (Swing Sisters 2006). The only entry condition into Swing Sisters is that one needs to identify herself as a woman and agree with feminist ideas. Also, members in the club are aware that there are lesbians as well as heterosexual women. The two couples noted that they chose the club carefully by 'filtering' (Davis et al. 2006: 164) other joinable clubs out. This supports the finding that those who meet their partner online are likely to select a community first, and then select a partner. This also suggests that Korean lesbians and gays may

feel excluded in society, and hence they want to step into 'their world' where they can be safe and fully included.

Meeting Offline

There were no heterosexual participants who first met their potential partner online. All of them met in a public place such as a pub, university or workplace including a blind date brokered by friends or co-workers. This finding coincides with Rosenfeld and Thomas's (2012) study that first meeting a romantic partner in public places or through a blind date is more common than meeting online among heterosexual couples. This might be because in Korea for heterosexuals meeting a potential partner is not considered to be a safe choice unlike lesbians and gays. The online dating market (targeting heterosexuals) has grown dramatically in Korea since 'Ium', the first social dating service, was launched in 2010 (Kang Jaewon 2012). Yet, as Kang Jaewon (2012) points out, such online dating services are still seen as potentially dangerous for heterosexual women as they were in the 1990s when internet groups such as 'Say Club' had many problems with dating chat rooms (see also, Jeong Younghye 2001; Yoon Sangkoo 2006). For example, there were a considerable number of incidents where women were raped and even killed by men whom they met in actuality after encountering them in online chat rooms.

There were also four same-sex couples who first met their partner in a public place, but the key difference from the heterosexual couples was that those lesbian and gay couples met at a venue hosted by close friends or acquaintances who already knew each other's sexual identity or at least they met in a safe place where it would not cause any harm even if they came out. For same-sex participants, there was only one exceptional case, a lesbian couple, Anna and Tina, who met in a public place where no one knew each other's sexuality, and safety after coming out was not guaranteed. This locational difference between homosexuals meeting their potential partner in limited places organised by online communities and heterosexuals without any restriction indicates that Korean lesbians and gays still feel unsafe in meeting a potential romantic partner openly (Joo Youngjoon and Youm Yoosik 2011; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014).

3-1-2. Planned Cohabitation or Not?

When I asked my interviewees whether they had set out to meet someone to cohabit with, the majority said 'no', that is, they did not have an intention to cohabit when they first met their current partner. However, there was an exception in that some of my participants had the desire to meet someone who might be 'cohabitable' before they met their current cohabiting partner and this desire appeared to be the desire for settlement and commitment.

Desire for Settlement and Commitment

Although most of my participants did not firstly meet their partner with the purpose of cohabiting, there were two lesbians who actually wanted to cohabit with the one they met or even before they met their current partner. Mim (L, 29) said that she met Choikang (L, 33) first when she was just about to move out of her parents' house two weeks later. She had prepared to live independently, not only physically away from her parents, but also financially without any help from her parents. She also mentioned that the reason why she arranged to live apart from her parents was that she ultimately wanted to live with her lesbian partner-to-be and that it would be easier for her to do so if she did not live with her parents. When her move day was set, Mim met Choikang at a social dance club (Swing Sisters). A couple of months later they became a couple, Mim suggested to Choikang that she come to live with her in her new place. According to Mim, cohabitation did not mean merely living together, but more importantly it implied a settled relationship with commitment. Although Mim proposed to Choikang to cohabit at an early stage of their dating relationship, they ended up living together ten months later because Choikang kept refusing for financial and some other reasons.

Agasa (L, 36) first met Lime (L, 39) in an online lesbian community chat room. They were both members of the lesbian online community called Vecon. They started chatting by chance. This developed into phone calls and they then met in person three months after the first chat. The reason why it took Agasa and Lime three months to meet was partly because they lived far away from each other, Agasa in Busan and Lime in Kyoungki, a suburb of Seoul. Agasa said that she had thought of living with Lime during the chat period and asked her mother whether she would agree to her moving to Kyoungki. At that time, Agasa had finished her studies and

was looking for a job. She thought that this would be a good opportunity to live with Lime and get a job there, as the job situation was better in Kyoungki than in Busan. However, Agasa also emphasized that she would never have considered cohabitation unless she was committed to Lime. Agasa pictured a settled relationship with Lime and that was a key reason why Agasa pushed for cohabiting with Lime. Although there is a discrepancy between Agasa and Lime in terms of when they began living together[37], they started cohabiting relatively earlier than other lesbian participants.

The desire for settlement and commitment were primary themes for those who had a prior intention to cohabit with their girlfriend, although only two out of 35 participants did so. Although the sample is too small to be representative or conclusive, my lesbian participants seemed to consider cohabitation comparably more carefully, valuing settlement and commitment more than the gays and heterosexuals, consistent with certain western studies (see Kurdek 2004). This finding is crucial, despite the small sample, because in Korea there have been no comparative studies on the degree of commitment among lesbian, gay and heterosexual cohabiting couples. Although Na Youngjeong et al. (2014) attempted to highlight lesbians' commitment in their (cohabiting) couple relationships, it was not explicitly compared to other sexuality groups such as gays and heterosexuals. It would be useful to do further comparative studies, using larger numbers of participants than I had to see if this pattern holds.

3-2. Who Cohabits and Why?

When the cohabitation phenomenon became visible and started growing in the 1970s and 1980s, people who cohabited were seen as deviant by the public where marriage was considered as the only legitimate relationship for a (heterosexual) couple. Hence, some researchers investigated what 'kind' of people cohabit, rather than marry. Henze and Hudson (1974) and many others looked at the characteristics and backgrounds of cohabiters and found a positive relation with the frequency of drug use, liberal attitudes, individualistic mindsets and early sexual practice, and a negative relation with religiosity, class and education. That is, people who used drugs

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[37] Lime said that they started cohabiting from the first day they met in person after chatting online for a couple of months. In contrast, Agasa said that it took them another couple of months after they actually met to decide that they were compatible. In either case, they entered cohabitation comparably earlier than other lesbians.

often, had unconventional attitudes and started to have sexual intercourse at an early age, were less religious, from a lower class and less well educated, were more likely to cohabit than marry (see also Clayton and Voss 1977; Yllo 1978; Macklin 1980; Newcomb and Bentler 1980; DeMaris and Leslie 1984; Booth and Johnson 1988; Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990). Early research on cohabitation thus at times tried to cast a negative light on cohabitation, not least in relation to marriage.

However, these negative characteristics of cohabitants found in the early studies are not quite consistent with my data. As discussed in the Methodology (Chapter 2), the educational background of my participants was relatively high. All of them had been to vocational college (two-year university) or had an upper degree: 25% had a postgraduate degree (MA or PhD) and 65% had BAs. Considering that only about 59% of the eligible population complete university or upper level degrees in Korea (OECD 2014c), my participants were comparably in a well-educated category. As for class, although class as understood in the west is not culturally recognised, most of my participants would not have been considered lower class, given their annual salary and profession. However, my data seems largely coherent with the existing findings in terms of religiosity and liberal attitudes (see Henze and Hudson 1974; Clayton and Voss 1977; Macklin 1980; Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990). Out of 35 participants, only one (Ken) seemed strongly invested on his religion (Roman Catholic). At least, they did not mention religion. Also, most described themselves as non-traditional, liberal, progressive and sometimes radical. This finding suggests that in Korea in 2013 when I conducted the fieldwork among educated people, well-educated ones with liberal attitudes tended to cohabit. This was certainly the case in my small sample.

3-3. The Time between Beginning Dating and Cohabiting

There is one study in the US on the amount of time couples spent as a couple after becoming romantically involved before they started to cohabit (Sassler 2004). Sassler (2004) identified three groups depending on the length of the dating relationship prior to cohabiting: accelerated cohabiters (cohabit within six months of starting to date); tentative cohabiters (within seven to twelve months); purposeful delayers (over one year). Sassler's (2004) work is important as it is the first work emphasizing the importance of the prior context to cohabitation. However, she only concentrates on

the actual quantity of time spent by couples until cohabiting. She does not look closely at 'how' they spend the time and why they consider cohabitation.

There is no research on the time which cohabiting couples take before embarking on cohabitation, although there are a few studies in Korea on how long cohabitation lasts and its link to cohabiting relationships' instability (see Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010). Whether cohabiting couples took less than a month or over a year to begin living together, there must be contextual reasons and this is crucial to understanding 'why' and 'how' they came to cohabit when they had other options, such as keeping on dating or marrying. Although Sassler explored this field already in 2004, her research was conducted in New York which is quite different from Seoul in Korea in terms of social and cultural context. Instead of utilizing Sassler's (2004) typology (accelerated cohabiters, tentative cohabiters and purposeful delayers), I created a more detailed table matching expanded categories to more detailed time period (Table 6).

Table 6. The Dating Period until Cohabitation

Sassler's Typology	Kim-Yoo's Typology	Duration	Lesbians	Gays	Heterosexuals
Accelerated Cohabiters	Instantaneous Cohabiters	Less than 1 month	0	1	3
	Early Cohabiters	1 to less than 3 months	2	3	2
	Accelerated Cohabiters	3 to less than 6 months	2	0	1
Tentative Cohabiters	Considered Cohabiters	6 to less than 12 months	3	0	0
Purposive Delayers	Purposive Delayers	1 to less than 3 years	0	1	1
	Late Cohabiters	3 to less than 6 years	0	1	1

Source: Interview data (2012) and Sassler (2004: 496-497).

Each number in Table 6 indicates the number of couples, not the number of participants. As previously discussed in Chapter 2 (Methodology), I think that counting the number of couples is more appropriate than counting the number of participants when factual information is described in my study.

Although I found Sassler's terminology persuasive, among my own interviewees a somewhat different pattern of cohabitation emerged, and I therefore revised and expanded Sassler's typology of cohabitants to capture the more distributed timeframes within which my interviewees decided to cohabit. Four things emerge very clearly from Table 6 (even as I acknowledge that my data are in no way generalizable). First, there was a proportion of what I have called 'instantaneous cohabiters', that is people who moved in together almost immediately upon meeting and certainly within one month. It is noticeable that these were a gay man and three heterosexual couples, possibly a somewhat surprising finding, given that heterosexual women were very worried about the potential disclosure of their cohabitation. None of the lesbians engaged in instantaneous cohabitation, maybe because on the whole they tended to be cautious daters, if one might put it that way, who tried to 'suss' other women out before they embarked on a relationship and often had an extended period of online exchanges before meeting up. Secondly, the largest overall number of participants, pretty much equally distributed across sexual identities, was early cohabiters, who began living together within three months of starting to date. Cohabitation was thus quite a quick decision for them. But, since in my view cohabiting within three months is reasonably different from cohabiting within six months, I differentiated these early cohabiters from those whom I have classed as 'instantaneous' and 'accelerated', because the dating timeframe in question was clearly longer. Thirdly, a case can be made for differentiating further between those cohabiting within six months, and those cohabiting within twelve months, and if one had a larger, statistically significant cohort, this might emerge as an important distinction – which I merely suggest here but which could inform future research. In my sample the numbers of couples cohabiting within three to six and within six to twelve months were equal, and, significantly, for the most part these were lesbian couples. No gay couple came either under the 'accelerated' or 'considered' category, suggesting that they either moved in fairly quickly together or much later. Fourthly, in line with Sassler's typology, I termed those who moved in together within six to twelve months as 'considered cohabiters' but then distinguished between 'purposive delayers' and 'late cohabiters' since in my view there is a significant difference between starting to cohabit within one to three years, and doing so after three years or more. Interestingly, no lesbian couples were in these

last two categories which means that my interviewees either moved in with each other within a year, or not at all. 'Late cohabiters' were clearly in a long-term and committed relationship where the cohabitation decision may have been less driven by immediate romantic concerns and more by the deep trust and understanding between the couple that had built up over a lengthy period.

What is noteworthy here is that the lesbians seemed to be the most careful and simultaneously decisive cohabiters whilst gays and heterosexuals turned out to either to slide into cohabitation immediately or to put it off for several years. To put it differently, no lesbians started cohabitation immediately from the first day they met, but all of them began cohabiting within a year. However, several heterosexuals and gays embarked on cohabiting within a month. For example, a heterosexual couple (Sunyoung and Sarang) started cohabiting from the day they first met. Yuyu (HW, 32) also began cohabiting from the first day she stayed at her boyfriend's house, but they had known each other previously. A heterosexual couple (Alice and Wonseok) started living together less than a month from the day they first met. A gay couple (Garam and Dio) took only about two weeks to start cohabiting. In contrast, two gay couples (Kenneth, and Leslie and Jinseok) and two heterosexual couples (Ken, and Pony and Shim) took over a year to start cohabiting.

The most frequently mentioned words by lesbians in talking about the timing to decide to cohabit were commitment and settlement. Consistent with Kurdek (2003, 2005), lesbians appeared to care the most about commitment and settlement in their couple relationship, compared to gays and heterosexuals. For example, Hosu (L, 29, w/Penni) said:

> I had a previous cohabitation experience and it didn't end well. So, I didn't want to rush into cohabiting. That's why I said 'no' to Penni when she proposed to me to live together. I didn't say just no to her, but also gave her some excuses, such as the expensive rent in Seoul. Then, she started working so much that I hardly saw her. Penni got another part-time job after her main work to make more money to pay for the rent. She finished her work around midnight and of course she was always too exhausted to come to see me. Then, I realised suddenly that 'I can live

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with her!' I sensed how committed she was to me. I think how long I
dated until we cohabited was not really important to me. It was the
timing, that I could sense, the right timing, when both of us were really
into each other.

Hosu was not isolated in this. Rather, almost all of my lesbian interviewees (except
Lime) seemed to regard commitment as most important when considering
cohabitation. Sassler (2004) looked at the relation between the length of the dating
time before cohabiting and the reasons for cohabitation. She found that most of those
in the accelerated cohabiter group (cohabiting within six months) reported
convenience or finance as key reasons, tentative cohabiters (cohabiting within seven
months to less than a year) indicated housing considerations and purposeful delayers
(cohabiting after more than one year) noted housing arrangements and financial
reasons as their primary motivation to cohabit. My findings are not entirely
consistent with Sassler's (2004). None of the essential reasons to cohabit
(convenience, money and housing circumstance) Sassler (2004) found were
mentioned by my participants, although they were indicated as secondary motives.
To find the key reasons that encouraged my participants chose to cohabit, I shall
focus next on the context in which the couples discussed cohabitation.

3-4. Motivations to Cohabit

When asked whether there were primary reasons for living together, none of my
participants indicated money, convenience or housing reasons as the key issue.
Rather than pointing out a pragmatic reason, a large number of my interviewees
portrayed their cohabitation as a 'natural' process. They then referenced love,
commitment and the desire to settle. Although saving money, convenience in terms
of being together and housing issues were also mentioned, they appeared to be
secondary. Additionally, cohabitation as a prelude to marriage was mentioned by two
heterosexual men (Ken and Sarang), with no other heterosexual participants having a
clear plan to marry after cohabiting.

Surprisingly, over half of my interviewees failed to identify a specific reason to
cohabit, but instead they tended to describe the process through which they slid into
cohabitation as 'natural'. This refrain 'natural' in terms of the process has been found

in some other qualitative studies (Sassler 2004; Huang et al. 2011). However, none of the existing studies examined why cohabiting couples maintained that their cohabitation was begun 'naturally'.

All of my participants who noted that they had had no prior discussion about cohabitation before doing so and over half of those who had had a prior discussion said that the process of moving in together was 'natural'. Yuyu (HW, 32) commented that she had initially planned to stay at her boyfriend's house temporarily to avoid her ex-boyfriend's visit to her house, but her staying went on longer than she had expected and she realised at some point that she was actually cohabiting with her boyfriend. However she did not initially consider living with her boyfriend as a 'stable' relationship, Yuyu said that it was so natural that she did not find any reason to go back to her house. Other participants also talked about a natural process in a similar way.

> You know, we just wanted to be together longer, more often and more intensively at the beginning of an intimate relationship. So, I stayed at Ahn's house overnight, the following night and the following night. I only went to my house to get some of my clothes, shoes and things I needed. And then I realised that I didn't have to go to my home because I already had everything I needed at Ahn's house. I felt more 'at home' at his house than mine where I was living with my parents. That's how we began cohabiting. It was just natural. Just like that. (Jaekyoung: G, 41, w/Ahn)

> We never 'discussed' cohabitation. It just happened. It was just natural. I just wanted to take care of Ed and stayed at her house most days after work. I felt so stable when I was with her and she also felt stable when we were together. Then, one day I moved out of where I lived and moved into Ed's house. (Basa: L, 38, w/Ed)

There were different stories from each participant who said that their cohabitation started 'naturally'. What the interviewees had in common, however, was that all of them emphasized that they had a strong bond with their partner and wanted to be

settled with her/him. For my participants 'what' they had with their partner and 'what' they ultimately sought from their couple relationship was more important for their cohabitation than some reason 'why' they had to cohabit. And I came to conclude that it was 'commitment' that they considered as the key element in deciding on cohabitation. This insight was the result of reviewing the phrases they used in describing 'what' they wanted from their relationship, such as being 'stable' (Yuyu, Sarang, Agasa, Jeongyol, Basa, Tina), having a 'home' (Jaekyoung), being 'settled' (Lime, Penni, Garam, Namul, Anna, Mim), a 'serious' relationship (Sarang, Pony, Jinny), a 'sincere' relationship (Dio, Bud), a 'long-term relationship' (Shim, Ahreum, Dongchi) and 'commitment' (Hosu, Ed). Many of the participants used several of the phrases above.

Needless to say, other secondary practical reasons were also involved, such as convenience and money. As Jaekyoung lived in a suburb, it took him more than one hour to visit Ahn's house and this obviously cost time and money. Lime also admitted that she did not have to do much housework after Agasa stayed and this was very convenient for her. In fact, secondary cohabitation reasons such as saving money, convenience and housing (see Kim Mihyun 2009; Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010) were mentioned by all of my interviewees. However, the well-known reasons were only side benefits according to my participants, not the main reasons for cohabitation. This finding to some effect fits with the existing work of Heo Eunjoo (2004) and Kim Mihyun (2009), both of whom investigated cohabiting university students. Love, emotional stability, dating convenience, saving money and sexual satisfaction were key reasons in their quantitative research. Park Eunjoo (2002) also examined cohabitation reasons but with non-university participants and found love, desire and financial stability as motivations for beginning cohabitation. What she newly discovered was her female interviewees' refusal to be part of hierarchical familial relationships formed after marriage. As most of her participants had feminist mindsets, they were resistant to the Korean patriarchal marriage and family system and rejected it. This was also evident among some of my participants (Shim, Ahreum, Dongchi and Cogito).

The idea of 'natural-ness' in the process of deciding to cohabit may be one way in which cohabitants chose to 'naturalize' their relationships, that is give it the force of

inevitability rather than constructing it as a considered choice. It reinforces the 'power of love' as beyond consideration. Or perhaps, they might have disliked to be asked by me and refused to answer why they entered cohabitation, because it is not very common in Korea that people ask those (heterosexuals) who will get married why they decided to marry. Naturalizing their cohabitation may suggest that cohabiting couples considered it as inevitable, a sign of the strength of their love and commitment.

3-5. Cohabitation Based on Commitment

The concept of commitment has been variously employed to discuss couple relationships in terms of love, stability, sincerity, permanence of a partnership, devotion, loyalty and monogamy (Carter 2010). In particular, commitment is assumed as a core in married relations such that the institution of marriage is thought of as an expression of couples' commitment with the implication that cohabiting couples lack commitment in their relationship (see Stanley, Rhoades and Markman 2006). Consequently, lack of commitment has been used as a key factor to attack cohabitation by claiming that cohabitation is unstable, vulnerable and easily breakable because the relationship is not based on commitment, but instead based on prematurity, impulse and convenience (see Kim Mihyun 2009; Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010).

However, commitment was cited as a significant element affecting my participants' decision to cohabit, even as most of them articulated the process of entering into cohabitation as so 'natural' that they could not quite remember whether they had had a proper discussion about it beforehand or not. As indicated in the previous section, commitment was co-articulated by my interviewees with other notions, such as stability, settlement, sincerity, having a home and a long-term relationship.

About two thirds of my participants were quasi living together with their partner, staying with their partner at either their partner's or their own home more than half the week before joining their household. While being together, they felt stable, settled, secure and at home with each other and wanted to continue this for a longer period than four days a week. I would argue that this feeling made them slide into the

situation of living together. This is why most of my interviewees could not pinpoint a specific reason for starting to cohabit.

The partners' commitment to each other took various shapes during the process when my participants prepared to cohabit or during the early phase of cohabiting. First, commitment was articulated through contributing money and housework to their joint household. Whether they began cohabiting at an existing home or a new one, both partners contributed a specific amount of money to set up their mutual space and also divided household chores according to their availability, interest and skills. For example, Sarang (HM, 29, w/Sunyoung) said: 'although we kind of started cohabiting from the first day we met, I would say it was only staying together. I would say we began cohabiting after I paid the rent and living expenses. You know, it means something, doesn't it?' As Sarang noted, he stayed at Sunyoung's from the first day they met. However, he differentiated only 'staying together' from 'living together'. Like Sarang, other interviewees agreed that one's financial contribution to the joint household was a specific sign marking their commitment. Moreover, housework contribution was also important in this respect for many cohabitants such as Penni (L, 29, w/Hosu).

> Frankly speaking, I didn't really feel that we were going to live together when we got a new flat. But once we moved in and when we were unpacking our stuff, I was cleaning here and there and Hosu was arranging this and that, I was able to feel, 'ah, yes, we're living together'. You know, I do most of the housework and she deals with paying the rent and bills. This sort of thing makes me feel that we're living together.

Having responsibility for paying a certain amount of money and dividing the housework were the most common indicators for my interviewees that they were cohabiting with commitment. The next common indicator of commitment was ceremonizing their cohabitation. Commitment was often manifested through having a ceremony for their new cohabitation relationship, for example proposing engagement or marriage (despite not being legally married) or exchanging a ring. Importantly, this only occurred among lesbian and gay couples. Garam (G, 34, w/Dio) proposed marriage to Dio after they had been living together for a while.

Garam and Dio lived together from the first day when Garam moved into a new flat and Dio helped him move. At that time, they were in a dating relationship of two weeks' duration. After a couple of weeks, Garam realised that they had been living together for some weeks, but he did not like their situation of just living together and wanted to ceremonize their relationship to confirm their commitment. Garam proposed marriage to Dio and gave him a ring. This ceremonizing in the early phase of cohabitation also occurred with Choikang (L, 33, w/Mim) who got a ring to ceremonize the commencement of a committed cohabitation although it was refused by her partner who thought that having a ring in a couple relationship was only a replication of heterosexual marriage customs.

The importance of commitment among cohabiting couples is in fact not a new finding (see Jamieson et al. 2002; Syltevik 2010; Baker and Elizabeth 2014). Jamieson et al. (2002), in particular, demonstrate in their research with young cohabiting couples aged 20 to 29 that the prevalent assumption produced by previous researchers that cohabitation is initiated and continued by young couples with less commitment than marriage is simply not true because she and her colleagues discovered that the vast majority of their participants revealed strong commitment in their cohabitation. This result is consistent with the work of Baker and Elizabeth (2014) who studied displaying public commitment among same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples in a long-term relationship. Paradoxically, however, commitment in cohabitation does not seem to connect with the idea of an everlasting relationship. A considerable number of my participants who stressed commitment in their cohabitation viewed that their relationship as rather flexible and thought that it could end at any time if it did not work out for them.

3-6. Committed, but Flexible Relationships

Although commitment may refer to permanence in a couple relationship, particularly in the case of married couples (Stanley et al. 2004), it is not the exclusive provenance of the institution of marriage (see Jamieson et al. 2002; Syltevik 2010). Surprisingly enough, a large number of my participants who underscored commitment in their relationship stated that their cohabitation might not last forever. Dio (G, 29, w/Garam), one of the participants who repeatedly mentioned the importance of

commitment for a couple, also said that he did not mean that a committed relationship would not break up. Rather, he stressed:

> I think if the relationship is really committed, dissolution should be easily made by joint agreement. I don't mean that it can just break up because we don't have to deal with all the miserable paperwork like heterosexuals who divorce. To me, commitment means responsibility to keep this relationship working well, to discuss any problems we have and to respect my partner's opinion. I don't want to restrain myself into a tie that I don't want to have. That's not commitment.

This odd connection between the committed couple relationship and its easy breakability seemed prevalent among my interviewees. Over half of my gay, lesbian and heterosexual participants commented on commitment in their cohabitation in a similar way to Dio. What is more, some participants, for example Sinbi (HW, 38, w/Cogito), seemed to set up a contract before commencing cohabitation, regarding their financial share in their property for example, in case of a break-up.

This idea seems related in a way to the concept of the 'pure relationship' (Giddens 1992). Giddens (1992) emphasizes that pure relationships may emerge outside of heteronormative marriage, grounded in sexual and emotional equality. Although the notion has been much criticized (see Jamieson 1999; Lewis 2001), in terms of its lack of acknowledgment of cultural and structural conditions in different societies where gender orders still strongly prevail, it does to some extent fit my interviewees' case.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the early stages prior to cohabitation such as how and where they met their romantic partner and the processes of entering cohabitation by analysing what my participants said about their discussions about cohabitation prior to living together. This also involved a discussion of where my participants found their partners.

I found that there was a stark difference between same-sex and different-sex couples in terms of where they first met their current cohabitee. Consistent with existing research (Joo Youngjoon and Youm Yoosik 2011; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014), almost all of my lesbian and gay participants first met their partner either in chat rooms or online communities, or offline event or social meeting organized by lesbian/gay (friendly) online communities. What is new finding in this is that my lesbian and gay participants showed 'filtering' in selecting which community to join and keep participating in. That is, lesbians and gays seemed to do community-selection first, and then proceed to partner-selection. Although no heterosexuals met their partner online, they also showed filtering to some extent in trusting their friend networks who introduced their potential partner.

Moreover, the result suggests that the Korean cohabiting couples in my sample viewed their relationship as committed and flexible, different from the institution of marriage. I explored how my participants met their partner, how long they took before moving in together, how they discussed living together and how they decided to do it. My findings suggest that: 1) cohabiting couples met their partner by chance or by arrangement through their friend or work colleague. Most of them did not have the intention to cohabit; 2) the period between dating and cohabiting varied. I used Sassler's (2004) typology of cohabitation decision-making but expanded and revised it into six categories to take a more nuanced account of my interviewees' narratives. My work thus developed Sassler's model whilst also producing a number of new findings regarding the different patterns of time period after which lesbians and gays and heterosexuals entered cohabitation. Here I described my lesbian interviewees as catious daters who – unlike both gays and heterosexuals – took a measured approach to living together, neither rushing into it nor leaving it for years. It would be interesting to conduct this research with a much larger cohort to see what the results might be then.

The vast majority of my participants found it difficult to pinpoint particular reasons why they cohabited while describing the process of entering into it as 'natural'. Commitment appeared to be the key concern for my interviewees. However, their committed cohabitation was at the same time not perceived as a necessarily permanent relationship. Rather, my interviewees thought that cohabitation could

terminate at any time when both partners agreed to do so, not because cohabitation lacks a legal framework, but because they wanted to be flexible and to make choices akin to a 'pure relationship'.

Although cohabitation was a chosen and agreed relationship for my participants, its acceptance by others such as family members, friends and work colleagues was another matter. I now turn to discuss the issues of disclosure of the relationships.

CHAPTER 4. Disclosing Cohabitation

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the context prior to cohabitation, closely looking at how Korean people met their potential partner and became intimate, how they decided on and started living together, and the reasons why they initially began considering cohabitation. In this chapter, I investigate the extent to which my participants let others know about their cohabiting relationship and how they dealt with this disclosure.

In contemporary western culture, cohabitation is normalized and a daughter may talk with her parents about her boyfriend (or girlfriend) with whom she lives, or a son may tell his parents about cohabiting with his girlfriend (or boyfriend). However, this is absolutely not the case in Korea. Cohabitation is usually referred to as 'premarital cohabitation' rather than 'cohabitation', with the institution of marriage remaining the pivotal relation. Moreover, same-sex couples' cohabitation has hardly been addressed in Korea.

As indicated in the Introduction, Korea is still a very conservative country in which familialism, patriarchy and heteronormativity are deeply embedded (Lee Dongwon 2005; Jang Sanghee and Jo Jeongmoon 2007; Ko Jeongza 2007; Byun Hwasoon 2010; Choi Jeonghye and Goo Myongsook 2010; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014). Consequently, a relationship based on cohabitation which is explicitly outside the institution of marriage that is designed to establish a 'healthy family' (Yoo Youngjoo 1999: 94) or a 'normal family' (Jo Jooeun 2005: 263) is viewed as threatening familialism in Korea. Lesbians' and gays' cohabitation with an intimate partner is of a different order. Since heterosexuality is strongly viewed as an unquestioned norm in Korea, same-sex couples remain invisible. That is, lesbian and gay cohabiting couples are not likely to be criticized for defying the normal family until they reveal that they are lesbian or gay. Additionally, lesbian couples do not have to worry about being branded as 'sexually loose women' because their cohabitation is unlikely to be suspected of sexual relations. Instead they are constructed as 'just close friends' or flatmates. Due to the fact that non-heterosexual cohabiting couples are beyond

people's imagination in Korean heteronormative society, their cohabitation is less challenged than that of heterosexual cohabiting couples. At the same time, however, they are not expected to reveal themselves as lesbian or gay even if they want to.

Since cohabiting couples (regardless of their gender and sexual identity) are not welcomed by their family or by wider society, there is a tendency for cohabiting couples to keep their relationship with their intimate partner secret. The few studies that do address Korean cohabiting couples have found that particularly heterosexual women hardly have a chance to discuss openly or get help from their parents in relation to their cohabitation (Kim Jiyoung 2005; Kim Mihyun 2009). Traditionally Korean young couples receive financial support from their parents to establish their marital household, and this absence of familial support can cause cohabitants to feel lower self-respect (Kim Jiyoung 2005). It may also bring about psychological isolation from their family and social networks (Kim Jeongsook 2003; Kim Mihyun 2009; Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010; Cho Ohsook 2012; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014).

In western research as well as in its Korean counterpart, little attention has been paid to the question of how widely cohabiting couples (whether they are heterosexual or homosexual) disclose their relationship status to others and in what ways they talk about it (see Macklin 1972; Jackson 1983; Huang et al. 2011). Yet, there are vast amounts of literature on self-disclosure more generally, with a focus on psychology (Jourard 1964), sexual self-disclosure (Herold and Way 1988), self-disclosure of one's HIV-Positive status (Shehan et al. 2005), self-disclosure in families (Gilbert 1976) and in personal relationships (Greene, Derlega and Mathews 2006). There are also many western studies dealing with lesbians' and gays' coming out (see Cass 1979; Coleman 1982; Cramer and Roach 1988; Morris 1997; Corrigan and Matthews 2003). But most of this literature does not address the issues I am concerned with in my research, namely lesbians and gays disclosing their cohabitation to others.

To shed light on this unexamined issue, this chapter centres on four areas. First, I analyse the ways in which unmarried cohabiting couples talked about disclosing their relationship to others. These others are categorized in terms of their relationships with the interviewee, ranging from parents, siblings and friends to work colleagues

and neighbours. I then explore whether or not there is a specific disclosure pattern among heterosexual, gay and lesbian participants. Following this, I investigate the specific disclosure patterns for women (heterosexual women and lesbian women) and for men (heterosexual men and gay men). Finally, I discuss how one's gender and sexual identity intersectionally affect the ways and degree of cohabiting couples' disclosure.

4-1. Disclosing Cohabitation to Others

Young people in Korea are in general expected to live with their parents until they marry. In other words, living with a different-sex girl/boyfriend or a same-sex flatmate apart from one's parents before marriage is very uncommon and considered to be somewhat shameful in Korea, particularly in the case of heterosexuals cohabiting. Therefore, those who cohabit with their intimate partner, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual, may encounter a moment where they need to explain their living situation to others and these 'others' will now be discussed in the sequence of parents, siblings, friends, work colleagues and neighbours.

4-1-1. Disclosure to Parents

Across all sexuality groups, I found that what participants were most concerned about was disclosing the nature of their couple relationship to their parents. As a result, few parents were aware of their child's cohabitation. The parents of a quarter of the heterosexual participants (three out of twelve) and a quarter of the gay interviewees (two out of eight[38]) became aware of the nature of their child's cohabitation in one of two ways: either the parents first 'sensed' it and then got a 'confession' from their child, or they were told directly by their child. Notably, no lesbians in my study told their parents about their cohabitation or had been 'caught out' by their parents. As a result, lesbians were the least 'out' to their parents in terms of their cohabitation.

Reasons Why People Do Not Disclose I: Cohabitation is Not What my Parents Expect from Me, but Marriage!

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[38] The total number of the gay participants was nine, but Bud's parents died early when he was a child. Hence, Bud was excluded in the discussion about disclosing cohabitation to parents.

As indicated in the Introduction, cohabitation is something unimaginable for the older generation, particularly my participants' parents whose ages ranged from fifty to seventy years old. All of my participants said that they were aware that cohabitation was not what their parents expected from them. Consequently, they were very careful about disclosure to their parents. As a result, over half of my heterosexual participants lied to their parents about their cohabitation, either saying that they lived alone or that they lived with 'just a friend'. Some were not involved in active lying, but chose to keep silent, not saying when not questioned by their parents whether they lived with someone or not. Only three out of all the heterosexual participants told the truth to their parents, either voluntarily or after being asked. According to most participants, they simply selected the lies they thought were easier to use to keep things the way they were before cohabiting. In other words, participants who had lived alone before starting their first cohabitation continued to let their parents assume that they were living alone and those who had lived with friends before cohabitation told their parents that they were living with their friends. Those who did not say anything to their parents stated that they had not been asked by their parents about how they lived, and thus they assumed that their parents still would not know about their cohabitation, but would simply think that they were living alone as before.

Although Korean parents prefer their children to marry rather than live together with a different-sex partner, they may be more open to cohabitation if the two people involved plan to marry. However, the problem which some of my participants faced, was that one partner in a couple was strongly against the idea of marriage or that there was a mutual agreement between the couple that they would not marry. As one interviewee said:

> I don't think my parents would be happy about it [cohabitation] given that they've kept asking me to get married. Once they become aware that I'm living with someone, they'd pressure me to get married. But Shim is fundamentally against the idea of marriage. (Pony: HM, 33, w/Shim)

Pony seemed worried that his parents might try to push for his cohabitation to develop into marriage, while his partner, Shim (HW, 32, w/Pony), was not interested

in marriage at all. Additionally, he said that he had asked Shim to marry him several times to rid himself of the stress and pressure from his parents concerning marriage, but she had always refused, saying, 'it'd be better we decide whether we marry or not after thinking enough whether marriage is really important in each other's life'. He commented:

> I've thought about it and concluded that marriage may not be so important in my life. The only problem is that my parents want me to get married and I'm often looked down on in my social relations in which most people at my age are married. You know, people who keep asking me when I'll get married. I'm just a loser from their perspective. […] I don't want to get married because of pressure from others. I just thought that I'd get married one day. I'm trying not to be keen on marriage. Shim seems like she won't marry me, though.

Pony was stuck between his parents' pressure for marriage and his partner's rejection of marriage. It is interesting to note that he, rather than his female partner, was keener to marry, in a culture where an unmarried, heterosexual, cohabiting woman has more to lose than an unmarried, cohabiting, heterosexual male.

Unlike Shim and Pony, there was a couple who agreed not to tell their parents about their cohabitation and not to marry. Sinbi (HW, 38, w/Cogito) said:

> I don't mind my parents knowing about my cohabitation. But it'd be awkward if only my parents know while my partner's do not. Anyway, it's already agreed between us that we won't tell our parents about us living together. You know, once we tell them, we would have to meet them together and you know, things will get complicated…

Sinbi said that she did not mind disclosing her cohabitation to her parents, but she agreed with her partner that they would not tell their parents in order not to complicate 'things'. The 'things' were articulated in her partner, Cogito's interview. He said:

My parents don't know about me cohabiting. What we [meaning himself and his partner Sinbi] disliked was that we'd become incorporated by marriage into the family and we would have to take certain responsibilities in family matters. For example, that I don't visit my family is now accepted to some extent. But after marriage, I'll be forced to visit my family with my wife twice[39] a year at least and my wife would be obliged to help with the memorial services for my ancestors. Given that I don't like to meet my relatives who I see only twice a year, how uncomfortable would my wife be? So I haven't let my parents know about my cohabitation. Once they get to know about it, they'd keep pressuring me to get married. (Cogito: HM, 40, w/Sinbi)

Cogito highlighted the specific demands in Korean marriage culture which require the man to function as son in his family and his wife serve her husband's family. He did not want to live with these constraints. Rather, Cogito viewed the Korean marriage system as a means of oppressing women, and that was a core reason why he did not want to marry. In the interview, he also talked about how most of his female friends and colleagues became socially disconnected from their peers after they married because they were expected to take on the typical daughter-in-law[40] as well as the wife role. He also mentioned his older sister's unhappy marriage and how this double role had contributed to her divorce. Having looked at his female friends and sister, he decided to refuse that kind of life. During my interview with Cogito, I was very surprised at what he said because I had never expected that I would hear such things from a heterosexual Korean man. He had an in some ways surprisingly progressive attitude.

Dongchi and Ahreum also decided not to marry, but to live together. Dongchi (HM, 30, w/Ahreum) in particular was concerned about their parents who might intervene in their couple relationship and pressure them to marry, even though he clearly

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[39] New Year's Day and Harvest Moon Day are the major festive days when the whole patrilineal family comes together.
[40] In Korea, once a woman gets married, she is expected to take care of her husband's family events, for example the birthday parties of the husband's parents and siblings, to participate in preparing for the memorial services for the husband's ancestors every New Year's Day and Harvest Moon Day. The memorial rituals are carried out twice a year at least and some families who value traditional customs conduct those rituals more often. All daughters-in-law are supposed to serve them.

declared that he would never marry. In his interview Dongchi strongly criticized the institution of marriage. First, he argued that the Korean marriage system discriminates between married and unmarried couples by providing wedded couples with tax benefits and the Jeonse loan support.[41] Secondly, he disagreed with the wedding ceremony culture. He commented:

> People in general only see a couple who have just a wedding ceremony as a proper wedded couple even if they don't register their marriage. In fact, if a couple hasn't had a wedding ceremony with family, friends and acquaintances, people don't recognise them as a proper married couple.

Dongchi further said that he refused the institutional aspect of marriage and hated the wedding ceremony culture which is so formal, ostentatious and hypocritical. Dongchi's hostility toward marriage seemed to arise from his parents.

> There was a moment when I and my parents talked about marriage. My position was that I won't get married, but live with someone, because both life styles are the same as living together with whom I love. However, my parents told me to marry because there is no difference between getting married and just living together. Honestly, I think the reason why they want me to marry is for the sake of appearance. They conceded it too, asking me how other people would look at them if I don't get married and how much they've spent on others' wedding ceremonies.

Dongchi thought that his parents cared more about their reputation and the money they had spent on other people's wedding ceremony[42] than about what Dongchi

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[41] Jeonse (전세 in Korean) is one of the most popular ways in Korea for people to rent a house. Basically, to get a house based on Jeonse, one needs to save a large amount of money for the deposit (usually 50-70% of the actual price of the house) and after a Jeonse contract, one pays only the bills, not a monthly rent. When the contract ends, the tenant can have the deposit back. For those who have enough money to pay Jeonse, it is assumed to be economically better than paying monthly rent.
[42] It is very common in Korea that guests sign a guest book and give money to the newlyweds (or their parents) in an envelope. The amount of money varies depending on the relationship between the guest and the newlywed.

really wanted. Here, two important issues arose: the parents' reputation in relation to the meaning of marriage and the money spent on wedding ceremonies.

Marriage and the wedding ceremony culture have particular meanings in Korea, which are quite different from other countries, particularly western countries such as the UK. For parents, making their children get married is considered their last responsibility to their children and in this respect, the wedding ceremony may be where parents can show the invited guests that they are successful parents by having their child marry. The culture of giving money to congratulate a couple on their wedding is also problematic. When one is invited to a wedding ceremony and attends, one is expected to give money as a means of congratulating the couple. The amount can range from approximately £10 to over £1,000 pounds, depending on the relation and intimacy between the giver and the couple. The scene where the guests queue to give some money in an envelope and say 'hello and congratulations' to the bride's and groom's parents is very common in Korea. The more one is invited to wedding ceremonies, the more one has to spend. For some parents, therefore, having a wedding ceremony for their child means collecting back the money they have spent on others' wedding ceremonies. However, Dongchi disagreed with the idea of having wedding ceremonies and what his parents thought about the inter-relation between children marrying and their reputation.

These types of discord between participants and their parents were very often articulated in the other interviews, too. They seemed to play an important role in affecting my interviewees' decision not to reveal their cohabitation to their parents, because they knew that cohabitation was not what their parents expected from them. The majority of my participants noted that their parents seemed to feel a lot of pressure in relation to their children's marriage:

> You know, there is a saying in Korea that the best crop of farming children for parents is to make their children marry a good wife or husband. (Pony: HM, 33, w/Shim)

> I heard from my partner that his mother asked why her children can't get married although they have no deformities. (Yuyu: HW, 32)

My mom doesn't care about me, although I'm their only child. […] But they do care whether I'd get married or not, because they believe that their responsibility for their child can't finish until they pin me onto a family, a community tied by marriage. […] I think the community can be flexible, whereas they don't think so. I know what they think about marriage and the relation of parents and children. That's why I didn't let them know about my cohabitation. (Ahreum: HW, 30, w/Dongchi)

These comments on how parents think of their children's marriage demonstrate that one's marriage in Korea is not only a personal matter, but a familial issue. Furthermore, some parents believe that their reputation will be destroyed if their children do not marry. As shown in the quotations above, if parents are unable to make their children marry, this may be seen by others as them failing in their upbringing of their children or that their children must have some problem.

Reasons Why People Do Not Disclose II: Women's Virginity

Although the term 'cohabitation' implies that a woman and a man live together, public views of cohabitation in Korea are rather discriminatory, particularly towards women cohabiters. All of my interviewees acknowledged that there are explicitly discriminatory perspectives on cohabiting women and men in Korean society. Notably, although they did not agree with them, many of my participants said that they did not feel free from these views. The views my interviewees had about cohabitation was strongly influenced by the importance attached to women's virginity. My interviewees suggested that the different views on women's and men's cohabitation were largely linked to the matter of women's virginity and this, in particular, influenced my heterosexual women cohabiters' hesitation and/or decision not to disclose their cohabitation to their parents.

Sunyoung (HW, 29, w/Sarang) gave me an account of her experience of having to reveal to her mother that she was no longer a virgin:

My parents realized that I'm not a virgin and they might even know that I'm living together with my boyfriend and everything really, because

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when I had medical treatment in a gynaecological clinic, I told my mom that I had it through my vagina. I should've told them to do it anally[43], though. It was so silly of me. I didn't know that virgins have gynaecological treatment through their anus. When I told my mom that I had it vaginally, mom looked at me seriously and asked me again whether I really had it through the vagina, not anally. Then, I realised that something was wrong and explained to her that the idea that virgin women have a closed hymen is wrong and blah blah blah […] You know, there is some truth, we can't have proper discussions between parents and a child. I know that even if I told my parents that I'm living with Sarang, they wouldn't tell anyone. But you know, I just didn't want them to feel disappointed.

Sunyoung's account illustrates how her mother was concerned about her virginity. It also shows that Sunyoung felt significant pressure because of her parents' disappointment due to her 'lost' virginity and due to the way in which her cohabitation was reduced to only a sexual matter in relation to her 'hymen'.

Like Sunyoung, many other heterosexual female participants expressed feeling pressure from their parents' expectation for them to remain a virgin. Yuyu (HW, 32) said that she initially hesitated telling her mother about her cohabitation, whereas her partner seemed more confident in telling his mother, as if cohabitation was not a big deal for him. Moreover, she felt the way in which she disclosed her cohabitation to her mother and the way in which her partner did it were different:

You know, people simply connect the cohabitation issue with sexuality [meaning having sex] and in that context women are always victims. I didn't feel that my partner worried about sex, but only about the cohabitation itself when he decided to tell his mother about it, while I

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[43] When women go to a gynecological clinic for medical treatment in Korea, they are always asked whether they want to have the treatment through their vagina or anally. If a woman says that she prefers to have it through her vagina, she is then again asked by a doctor or a nurse whether she has had a sexual relationship with a man to make sure that her virginity is not compromised by vaginally administered treatments.

was implicitly concerned about how to tell my mom and where to start.
[…] Cohabitation is not all about sleeping with a man, is it?

Yuyu was the only heterosexual female participant who told a parent about the fact that she was cohabiting with a different-sex partner. Although she only disclosed this to her mother, she also talked about the stress of this for her as a woman.

The heterosexual male interviewees also acknowledged the problem that women are always under pressure about their virginity, while this was not an issue for men.

> The double standard of premarital sex still exists. It's still more difficult for women than men, although Korean society has changed a lot. I suppose if people are asked about this issue [cohabitation and disclosure], they wouldn't answer that it's because of the matter of women's virginity. It doesn't sound cool, does it? But the core reason is just that. Women can't disclose their cohabitation to their parents or anyone because of the bloody premarital virginity. Just one key reason. That's it! (Wonseok: HM, 36, w/Alice)

> When I told my mom that I'll cohabit with my girlfriend, she warned me that I'd get blamed by my girlfriend if I break up the cohabiting relationship. Because once a woman cohabits, she gets stigmatised. (Ken: HM, 30)

> I don't think my mom would've allowed me to stay together with Sunyoung, if I was a woman. It's still different, isn't it? Man and woman […] Well, I might not even have been able to ask my mom about cohabitation, if I was a woman. (Sarang: HM, 29, w/Sunyoung)

Wonseok pointed out that the matter of women's disclosure of cohabitation is closely related to virginity, saying: 'Just one key reason. That is it!' Ken told me what his mother had told him, using the word 'stigmatised', suggesting that women who cohabit are blamed for losing their virginity before marriage. Sarang also recognised the difference in treatment between men and women. Taken all together, whether

they told their parents about their cohabitation or not, virginity in women was an issue acknowledged by all heterosexual participants regardless of their gender, and was considered one of the key reasons why women did not reveal their cohabitation to their parents.

Reasons Why People Do Not Disclose III: Stress as the First Son in the Family

Men's main pressure from parents was the 'stress as the first son'.[44] The *Jangnam* in Korea is meant to carry on his family's name and take responsibility for the memorial services of his (patrilineal) ancestors (Yoon Youngmoo 2004). They have high expectations placed upon them by the other family members and often that makes them feel pressured, described in Korean with the phrase 'Jangnam complex' (Yoon Youngmoo 2004: 25). My male cohabitants who decided to cohabit with their girlfriend (or boyfriend) often expressed their stress as the first son; it led them to conceal their cohabitation from their parents in order not to disappoint them.

> You may not believe it, but I'm the Jangnam. My mom used to hide a couple of gifts that she bought for her grandchildren until five to six years ago. When I asked my mom why she hid some, not giving them all, she said that she'll give them to my children when I have kids. […] They sometimes asked me whether I had a plan to get married. I told them that I have a girlfriend, but I won't get married. Then, they don't say much about it. You know, in this situation, it'd be better for everyone that I don't talk about my cohabitation (Cogito: HM, 40, w/Sinbi)

> I think I'm confined within the idea of filial piety as the Jangnam. It's something you can't escape from. Given that they're expecting me to tell them I'll marry soon, I couldn't tell them that I'm cohabiting with Shim. (Pony: HM, 33, w/Shim)

Cogito had two older sisters and Pony had one younger sister. As the first son, both of them seemed to be concerned about disclosing their cohabitation to their parents

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[44] The first son is called 'Jangnam' (장남 in Korean) and it usually refers to the eldest son. However, it was once used as 'the first son', excluding the female siblings. For example, Cogito (HM: 40, w/Sinbi) had two older sisters, but he described himself as the first son in his family.

because they knew how much their parents expected them to be the good Jangnam. Gay men as well as heterosexual men were under pressure as the Jangnam.

> I think my parents know that I'm different from others. Although I'm the Jangnam, they haven't asked me much about marriage, for which I'm truly grateful. […] I think heterosexuals as well as me who are cohabiting don't carry out their duty to their parents as a child, Jangnam in my case. I don't want to disappoint my parents if I can. (Kenneth: G, 40)

Kenneth mentioned 'duty' which was presented in Pony's interview as 'filial piety'. Male interviewees who were either the only son or the first son in their family clearly felt this burden.

Coming out as Gay and Cohabitation

When I asked my gay participants about disclosure, half of them described lying to their parents, stating that they lived with 'just' a male friend. A quarter let their parents know that they lived alone while the rest told them the truth either voluntarily or out of necessity. Interestingly, some of my gay participants thought that coming out should precede disclosing their cohabitation to others, including their parents. In other words, for gays, disclosure of cohabitation seemed to be a subset of coming-out, and thus some participants used the phrase 'coming out' to describe 'disclosing their cohabitation'.

Some of the gay participants had considered whether they should come out to their parents or not and, as a result, two of them managed to tell their parents about their gayness and cohabitation. The rest decided not to disclose to their parents. Jaekyoung's (G, 41, w/Ahn) and Garam's (G, 34, w/Dio) parents knew the nature of their cohabitation. However, the way their parents became aware of it was different. Jaekyoung told his parents voluntarily about his gay sexuality and cohabitation, whereas Garam was 'caught out' by his father accidentally and confessed to his parents later that he is gay and the person he is living with is his intimate partner. In contrast, Kenneth (G, 40) and Jeongyol (G, 35) decided not to disclose their cohabitation to their parents. While my other gay participants told their parents they lived with 'just' a male friend, Kenneth and Jeongyol told their parents that they

lived alone. This difference may arise from whether their parents noticed that their son was gay or not. Kenneth and Jeongyol completely cut off any suspicions from their parents by telling them that they lived alone, but said that there had been an occasion in the past when their parents had become aware of them being a gay, whilst the others who told their parents that they lived with a 'just' male friend thought that their parents might not know about the nature of their cohabitation. Both Kenneth and Jeongyol said that their parents might know that they lived with a lover, but they never discussed the matter openly; rather, their parents always pretended to know nothing about their son being gay, asking instead when they would get married.

In addition, a small number of participants who considered coming out saw gays' cohabitation as not exactly the same as coming out, while most of the others saw them as the same on the whole. For example, Jeongyol said: 'that parents know their son is gay is different from that they know their son lives together with a man [his partner]. It's another form of coming out.' Jaekyoung also had a similar view:

> Of course, they didn't like it. Given that they don't understand that I'm gay, how could they possibly like me cohabiting? There was no fierce argument about it because it wasn't necessary. I mean, cohabitation is a way-out concept [than coming-out] to them in the situation where they simply can't understand me being gay.

Although most homosexual participants (including lesbians) regarded disclosing their cohabitation as coming out, some gay interviewees clearly made the distinction between them. Jeongyol saw gays' cohabitation as 'another form of coming out'. Yet, neither he nor Jaekyoung mentioned what made coming out as gay and disclosing their cohabitation different. Garam's (G, 34, w/Dio) point may answer it. He argued that his parents were scared to imagine two men sleeping together under one blanket.

> My parents knew nothing about it. This time, my parents and older brother became aware of it. Before I came out, I just told my parents that I live together with a younger friend. Although they didn't quite like that

I was living with someone, they just accepted it because I told them that he [Dio] paid the rent. Nevertheless, they thought it weird that two men sleep together under one blanket. My mom, in particular, hated it. After a while, I came out, about a few months ago. What my father first asked me on the phone was what relationship I was having with Dio. He asked me unilaterally and just hung up the phone. I couldn't even answer it. He may well know. The fear that he awfully disliked it. The fear that they could imagine what two men sleeping together under one blanket would do, turned out to be true.

Garam indicated that 'two men sleep together under one blanket' might imply gays' anal sex and that was the fear that his parents had. This may be why Jeongyol and Jaekyoung placed disclosing gays' cohabitation into a different category from coming out as gay. Cohabitation seemed to make gayness more concrete.

I've Never Ever Thought about It

In comparison to the heterosexual and gay interviewees, it was noticeable that there were no lesbian participants who told their parents that they lived with their intimate partner or were 'caught out' by their parents. This may suggest that cohabiting lesbian participants were very afraid of disclosing the nature of their cohabitation to their parents as well as very careful about their behaviour and what they said in order not to be caught out by their parents. This is a clear indicator of how stigmatized lesbianism continues to be in Korean society.

One of the key themes that permeated all the interviews with the lesbian participants in terms of disclosing their cohabitation to their parents was that they had never considered it. Whilst some of the heterosexual and gay interviewees reported that they had had a conversation with their partner or had thought about telling their parents, few lesbian participants had experienced this. When I asked whether they had let their parents know about their cohabitation, the lesbian participants mostly answered in one of two ways: either they were surprised at me for asking such a 'ridiculous' question, since I should have 'expected' or 'known' the answer, or they simply said 'of course not!' For example:

In the case of my family[45], no explanation would be needed in the Korean society context, I suppose. (Ed: L, 33, w/Basa)

Coming out[46] to my parents? No way! (Agasa: L, 36, w/Lime)

Of course I haven't! They shouldn't know about it at all. (Mim: L, 29, w/Choikang)

Of course not! (Anna: L, 31, w/Tina)

Their emotional and linguistic expression about disclosing themselves seemed much more closed than that of the other interviewees. The majority of the lesbians said that they had never even thought about revealing their lesbian identity and the true nature of their cohabitation to their parents. It seemed that disclosing their cohabitation to their parents was not even an option, and something that they must not be 'caught out'. This is remarkably different compared to the heterosexuals and gays participants. Whereas a considerable number of gays and heterosexuals (males in particular) did not seem to be seriously concerned about disclosure, the lesbians' attitude was much more repressed than that, not even being able to imagine disclosure of their cohabitation to their parents.

4-1-2. Disclosure to Siblings

The number of participants who revealed their cohabitation to their siblings was approximately double that of those who disclosed their cohabitation to their parents among heterosexual and gay participants. Lesbian participants were also more likely to tell their siblings about their cohabitation. Moreover, where parents knew about the cohabitation, all the siblings also did, whereas the reverse was not the case.

Whistle-Blower

About half of heterosexual participants disclosed their cohabitation to their siblings, almost a twofold increase from the number of those who disclosed it to their parents.

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45 Ed talked of her 'parents' as her 'family'.
46 Lesbian participants as well as gays often used the term 'coming out' synonymously with 'disclosing the nature of their cohabitation'.

At the same time, half also continued to keep their cohabitation secret from their siblings. Interestingly, more female participants than male ones chose to disclose their cohabitating status to a sibling. Four out of five[47] female interviewees let their siblings know about their cohabitation, while only two out of six male participants did so. The two male participants whose siblings knew about their cohabitation had also told their parents about their cohabitating status. That is, no male interviewee told his siblings about his cohabitation without telling his parents, whereas over half of female participants shared their cohabitation with their siblings in secret, not letting their parents know about it.

The majority of heterosexual participants who did not reveal their cohabitation to their siblings said that they were worried that their siblings might tell their parents. The results seemed quite gendered. Except for Alice, all[48] female heterosexual participants told their siblings about their cohabitation. However, only two men (Ken and Sarang) told their siblings and this is because their parents knew already, as their cohabitation was assumed to be a premarital relation. What is more interesting is that those male heterosexual participants who did not disclose their cohabitation to their siblings were all the only son in their family and they seemed certain that their sisters would tell their parents about it straightaway if they revealed it to them.

> Well, I basically don't want any of my family members to know that I'm cohabiting. And if my older sisters knew, they would spread it to everyone so that all my family members can pressure me to get married. (Cogito: HM, 40, w/Sinbi)

> Telling them [my sisters] that I'm cohabiting is not very different from telling my parents. (Pony: HM, 33, w/Shim)

As indicated earlier, Cogito and Pony were in the situation where their parents kept asking them to get married and both of them were very stressed about it. They seemed anxious that they would be pressured into transforming their cohabitation

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[47] The total number of the female heterosexual participants was initially six. However, given that Ahreum was the only child in her family, she was excluded in this section.

[48] Ahreum was also excluded from the result due to the fact that she was the only child in her family.

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into marriage by their parents through their siblings' whistle-blowing. As will be discussed below, this is a very different situation from the gays and lesbians, whose siblings tended to keep their cohabitation secret and protect them from the potential risk of being discovered by their parents.

They Shield Me from our Parents (or Relatives)

For my gay participants, the attitude towards disclosure of the nature their cohabitation was slightly different regarding their siblings, compared to their parents. Most gay participants whose parents had become aware of their child's cohabitation at some point said that the experiences that they faced with their parents were unpleasant. In contrast, however, the majority of gay interviewees who disclosed their couple relationship to their siblings said that their siblings had been very supportive, mediating between the interviewee and their parents (or relatives). Bud (G, 42) stated that his younger sisters shielded him from their relatives' pressure of marriage when they gathered on festive days:

> Sometimes our uncles or aunts behave as if they're my parents, you know [because our parents died when we were young]. I appreciate that they care about us. But it often goes too far. I guess, it was on New Year's Day, one of our uncles asked me lots of questions like whether I have a girlfriend and when I'd get married. I was not quite prepared for his surprise questions and hesitated, thinking what to say. Then both my sisters started shielding me from his questions, answering that I've got a girlfriend and she seemed alright and blah blah. You know, those heterosexuals' dating stories. Since then, my sisters have always helped me to get out of the uncles' and aunts' pressure regarding my marriage.

It is quite common for a person to be asked by their aunts or uncles about dating or a plan to marry on a festive day. As discussed earlier, one of the most important parental duties towards children in Korea is perceived to be getting the children married. Hence, given that Bud's parents died early, his aunts and uncles might have taken on a certain parental role and they might have thought that their responsibility would end when Bud got married, as many parents think. However, he was not ready to defend himself against his uncle's questions about his dating situation. His sisters'

protection surprised him on the festive day. This type of 'shielding' of one's siblings also occurred in the case of Bud's partner.[49]

According to Bud, his partner is the youngest son of five siblings in his family. He told his siblings about his sexual identity and the nature of his cohabiting relationship. Although there was some trouble with his siblings in the beginning when he first told them, the relationship between them seemed to have recovered by the time of the interview. Bud told me an episode of how his partner's siblings helped them:

> Although his [Bud's partner's] parents were not told that their son was living together with someone, they sensed something. And they decided to pay a surprise visit to their son's house, wondering what type of a girl their son was living with. Fortunately, it was after he came out to his siblings. His brothers [50] started shielding him. They called him, letting him know that their parents were on their way to our house in order not to be caught out by his parents. So I frantically packed and cleaned away any traces of me and then took refuge somewhere else. We were nearly caught, but luckily it went ok. Now his brothers have taken on the role as a shield [for us]. For example, when his parents asked my partner why he still isn't married, his brothers supported him, saying that there were many people getting married late nowadays.

In a similar manner as Bud's sisters, the siblings of Bud's partner also seemed to protect Bud and his partner from their parents' pressure to marry. They helped Bud's partner and Bud by letting them know about their parents' surprise visit in advance. Here, the siblings did not only shield their gay brother from their parents, but they also functioned as informants supplying information about their parents' surprise visit.

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[49] I did not have a chance to interview Bud's partner, and thus Bud tried to tell me about him too, during his interview.

[50] In Korea, the term 'brother' often refers to 'siblings' including sisters as well as brothers.

This sort of informant role of one's siblings was also referred to in Garam's (G, 34, w/Dio) interview. He talked about his older sister who was also an informant for him:

> According to my older sister, my mother told her that 'I once suspected Garam of being gay because as far as I know, he likes to live alone and is not someone living together with someone. Yet, he's living with a man under one blanket. So, I wondered once if he's a gay. I'm so ridiculous, ain't I?' After my mother concluded that she was ridiculous, thinking such a thing, she didn't say anything further and that was all. At that time, my older sister was so surprised at what mother said that and she sent me a text, telling me what mom had said to my older sister and that I needed to be careful as mom would notice sooner or later.

Clearly Garam's sister also played an informant role for him, delivering what their mother said about his cohabitation and what she suspected. This is in complete contrast to the heterosexual male participants' narratives, where they worried that their sisters would tell on them about their cohabiting and/or gay status.
This form of sibling protection was also present in the lesbian interviews. What distinguished the lesbians from the gays was that they were more grateful to and proud of their siblings that understood and supported them having an intimate cohabitation with their same-sex partner.

Thank You, my Proud Supporter
Only two lesbian participants (Penny and Basa) let their siblings know about the nature of their cohabitation explicitly, and Jinny implicitly discussed her cohabitation with her siblings. This is a very small number, especially when compared to the number of heterosexual and gay participants who told their siblings. Two shared themes clearly emerged from the interviews with Penny (L, 29, w/Hosu) and Basa (L, 38, w/Ed) in terms of disclosure of cohabitation to their siblings, which was 'pride and thankfulness'. This was rarely the case for the heterosexual and gay interviewees. For example, Penny said:

When we [Penny and Hosu] went surfing last summer, we went together with my older brother. He's very similar to me, not like an old fogey. […] My brother seemed to notice our relationship, continuously asking me lots of questions about Hosu. What he said to me later was 'live well [with her]'. We're like comrades, relying on each other, rather than on our parents. Despite laying aside my parents, I really wanted to let my brother know about it [the nature of her cohabitation with Hosu], because I was sure that he would understand it. Even if he doesn't like it, he wouldn't intervene. Although it wasn't an official introduction, I showed him Hosu anyway and he also seemed to like her. He even said to me that I should treat her well. You know, I knew it! I knew that he would understand and support me. I was so proud of my older brother. I really thanked him, though I didn't tell him so face-to-face.

Although Penny did not disclose the nature of her cohabitation with Hosu to her brother explicitly, she deliberately took him along when she and Hosu went surfing. As Penny wanted and expected, her brother seemed to understand their relationship (as well as their cohabitation) and supported her, commenting 'live well!' Moreover, Penny appreciated that her brother understood and supported their relationship and was very proud of him. In fact, I still remember her face during the interview. When she was talking about her brother, she was very passionate and kept smiling. As a researcher and a person listening to her, I was able to feel how much she thanked him and how proud she was. Surprisingly, I encountered the same when I interviewed Basa:

I've always been very thankful to my older sister and proud of her. […] I came out to my older sister first, and then told her about Ed. She's now only volunteering, but she used to be in the religious area, as a nun for a long time. I'd really wanted to tell her about myself, but I hesitated to come out because I couldn't open my mouth, seeing her face. She kept asking me what the matter is and I told her that I don't like men, saying 'I don't hate men but I don't like them.' She asked me back, 'What? What do you mean by that?' It seemed she didn't understand what I meant. The conversation kept on and on and finally she understood and said: 'when

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you were hesitating, I wondered whether you're seeing a married man. It's not a big deal. Don't be ashamed of yourself. It's only love that a human being is supposed to feel. It's not a sin at all. It's not your fault. I don't see it's a problem. I'm also not ashamed of you.' I was so surprised that she was saying all this. I couldn't believe that this person was really my older sister as I know her. Afterwards, I told her about Ed on the phone, saying that Ed is a very good person and we're living together very well. After a few months, she first asked me to have dinner together with Ed. That's how the three of us first met.

Basa described how she first came out and introduced her partner to her older sister. She greatly appreciated that her religious sister understood her and even asked to have dinner together. Like Penny, Basa also expressed how grateful she was to her sister. These sentiments of pride and gratefulness were not present in the gay interviews. This deep appreciation of their siblings about understanding their lesbian sexual identity and supporting their same-sex cohabitation was particularly evident among the women and suggests the importance they attach to social acceptance in a culture that consistently marginalises them.

4-1-3. Disclosure to Friends

Almost all heterosexual participants had experiences of disclosing their cohabitation to at least one friend, and all lesbian and gay interviewees had told their friends from the lesbian and gay community. Yet, only about two thirds of gay and one third of lesbian participants had told their heterosexual friends (i.e. hometown friends and school friends) about the nature of their couple relationship.

The reasons why some disclosed their cohabitation to friends varied. Some said that there was no shame or reason not to reveal that they were cohabiting. In these cases, participants were mostly in a cohabitation-friendly friendship network and disclosure usually happened as a way to relieve stress from their cohabitation relationship by talking about daily issues, such as arguments between a couple. Some said that they wanted their cohabitation relationship to be recognised by their friends in order to show that they had a good life. Others wanted to ask advice about cohabitation from friends who had cohabitation experiences when it was their first cohabitation.

Why not Marry?

Most of my interviewees who let their friends know about the fact that they were cohabiting with a different-sex partner had the experience of being asked by their friends, 'why not marry?' What they felt about their friends' initial reaction varied. Half of them commented that Korean people in general, including their friends, seemed to want to do things 'the same way as others'. For example:

> You know, Korean people are desperate to follow the path, so called 'normal'. When I first told my friends about my cohabitation they just said that it [cohabitation] would be interesting to experience or something like that. But when they are drunk enough and talk to me frankly, they asked me why I'm still like a child and I need to wake up. (Ken: HM, 30)

> Given that everyone lives to get married, my friends also seemed to just take it for granted naturally. (Yuyu: HW, 32)

> In my experience, the core problem was that people in general as well as my friends were obsessed about living in the same formation [family] as others do. (Sinbi: HW, 38, w/Cogito)

These participants emphasized that their friends and Korean people are anxious about being derailed from the route called 'normal', to which everyone seems to conform. Others expressed similar sentiments:

> My friends told me that they understood me cohabiting but it seemed to me that they couldn't get out of the frame of marriage. (Cogito:HM, 40, w/Sinbi)

> When I first told my close friend whom I thought would understand, she was seriously worried about me and just couldn't understand why I'm cohabiting. […] It seemed that she had no ability to imagine that one can live in a different way than marriage. I got a feeling from her that she just

couldn't raise a question mark on the marriage issue. For people in general, marriage is something that people must do. (Ahreum: HW, 30, w/Dongchi)

These two participants as did others pointed out that even in their own generation, among their friends could not imagine cohabitation, but only marriage. It may be because they were afraid of being an outsider from the 'normal' world as the previous examples showed. Wonseok (HM, 36, w/Alice) had his own opinion about this:

> People are just crazy about getting married, you know. It's like going to school. You go to primary school, middle school, high school and then university. Marriage is the next step after university. It's as simple as that. So, I couldn't complain that some of my friends wouldn't understand cohabitation because they are just one of the common people in Korea.

As Wonseok indicated, marriage tends to be regarded as a specific and inevitable step that one must take in Korea. This explains why my interviewees were frequently asked by their friends, 'why not marry?'

Gendered Cohabitation: Men Can, While Women Can't
The attitude of my heterosexual interviewees towards the disclosure of their cohabitation to their friends was significantly gendered. The initial reaction of Ken (HM, 30) to my question, 'did you let your friends know about your cohabitation?' was very interesting:

> I told almost all my friends, but my girlfriend didn't because she's a woman. As far as I know, she didn't tell anyone [about our cohabitation] because she's a woman. She seems to conceal it. I told all my friends about everything because I'm a man.

Ken was very aware of the gendered disclosure pattern in his relationship, highlighting what he as a 'man' did compared to his girlfriend as a 'woman'.

Although he did not state explicitly why a man can reveal his cohabitation to his friends while a woman cannot, this gendered distinction, however vague, was also often articulated in the other interviews with male heterosexuals:

> Well, I guess, talking about our cohabitation to people in general as well as to my friends is alright for me because I'm a man. Let me tell you something. When I was asked to have an interview with you by Haidi, I simply said 'ok'. However, after I hung up the phone, I was a little worried in case Sinbi felt uncomfortable about it because, you know, she's a woman. (Cogito: HM, 40, w/Sinbi)

> You know, cohabitation is not a problem for men, while it is for women. I could've told my friends that we're cohabiting if Alice was alright with it. But she didn't want my friends to know about us living together. So, I told only a couple of older friends whom I can trust and get advice from. (Wonseok: HM, 36, w/Alice)

The terms 'women' and 'men' were used vaguely in these two interviews. Neither Cogito nor Wonseok offered any explanation as to why men have no problem with disclosing their cohabitation to their friends whilst women do. This kind of discrimination between women and men was so deeply embedded in my interviewees' minds that they did not feel that they needed to explain it further.[51] I asked Wonseok to explain further why he thought that women and men dealt differently with this disclosure. He said:

> Basically, cohabitation is less valued than marriage in Korea, isn't it? If this cohabitation breaks up and Alice is not related to me, that'd be alright because she'll be nobody to my friends as well as to me. But we're not cohabiting just for fun. I've told my friends that I'll marry Alice. If my friends became aware that she cohabited with me when we get married, they would look down on her. Now, my friends think Alice is quite a good person. But once they are aware of our cohabitation, she'd

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[51] Possibly, it was because they thought I as a Korean was fully aware of the sexual double standard.

be seen as cheap by my friends. So, I would rather not disclose to my close friends that I'm cohabiting after I told them that I'll get married. Alice was also worried if I tell my friends, saying to me not to tell them.

Wonseok makes two important points. First, he states that cohabitation is perceived as less valued than marriage generally in Korea and probably by his friends as well. Second, Wonseok notes that Alice would be viewed as 'cheap' by his friends if their cohabitation was revealed. In his narrative, this concept of cohabitation as cheap is suddenly replaced by 'cheap Alice'. Wonseok himself does not somehow become 'cheap', because of the gender norms governing sexual behaviour. 'Cheapness' turned out to be unsurprising and ultimately associated with the matter of female virginity:

Basically, there is a double standard in this society in terms of premarital sex and the issue is still conservative for women. I think this is the biggest part of the problem. […] Because everyone seems to live, having premarital sex whether they're men or women. And saying such a thing doesn't sound right because it's obviously not fair and doesn't even make sense. But in fact, the matter of women's virginity is the core.

Wonseok was convinced that the fundamental difficulty of disclosing one's cohabitation to others was the sexual double standard. As Byun Hwasoon (2010) and many others argue, discriminatory sexual norms prevail in Korea and women are their victims. Won Mihye (2011: 45) also points out that disapproval of premarital sex tends to be only targeted at women, stigmarizing them as 'whores', while men are free from it. In this respect, Korea in the twenty-first century is not very different from western countries in the mid-twentieth century.

More Gay Friends and Fewer Straight Friends
In comparison to my heterosexual participants, my gay and lesbian interviewees were much less likely to maintain their friendship networks with their heterosexual friends from their hometown or schools than meeting those they knew through gay communities. Almost all my gay participants had disclosed their intimate cohabiting

relationship to one or two of their heterosexual friends and all the gay participants had told their community friends about it.[52]

> My partner stopped meeting his university friends because when they met, the subject of conversation was usually kids, wife and how to increase their fortune. With these limited topics, nothing was of interest to him. I also hardly meet anyone other than my gay friends. I just don't feel the desire to meet past [heterosexual] friends. You know, we meet friends to talk and enjoy ourselves in a comfortable way. That's all, isn't it? (Bud: G, 42)

> My case was very limited. I rarely came out to others, which was quite a problem. Since I realised that I was gay, I think I narrowed my social relations. I couldn't help it, but felt ashamed because the social attitude at that time was not accepting. So I didn't want to meet my friends, hiding myself. I don't have to meet them, getting stressed, do I? I now meet only a few straight friends who understand me, but it's also not easy. As they're over 30, they tend to get married and what we shared has disappeared. (Kenneth: G, 40)

Both Bud (as well as his partner) and Kenneth talked about why they met their heterosexual friends less, confining their friendship mostly to gay friends. They mentioned that they had less in common with their straight friends as they aged. As a result, they became more committed to their gay friends. Moreover, they all had specific gay communities or social groups that they attended regularly, such as Chingusai,[53] Donginryun[54] and others. This may be partly because, as Jaekyoung (G: 41, w/Ann) pointed out, gays cannot meet other gays generally in Korea, but only in gay communities, clubs or bars. As indicated in Chapter 3, all of my gay participants had met their partner at a gay social, which not only guaranteed that all men in that

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[52] By the term 'community friends', I mean those from the gay communities, either online or offline.
[53] Chingusai (meaning 'between friends') is a Korean gay men's human rights group, founded in February 1994 (see http://chingusai.net/xe/Introduction).
[54] Donginryun (meaning 'solidarity for LGBT human rights of Korea') is a human rights group for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders, founded in 1998 (see http://www.lgbtpride.or.kr/).

place were gay, but also allowed for them to feel comfortable with other gay friends who knew about their relationship.

This was also evident in my interviews with the lesbians. Lesbian cohabiting couples' disclosure to their heterosexual friends was remarkably lower than the degree of disclosure by heterosexual and gay participants. In contrast, they were usually completely open to their lesbian friends, just like the gay participants.

4-1-4. Disclosure to Work Colleagues

The degree of disclosure of the nature of one's cohabitation to one's working colleagues was affected by where my participants were working. Cohabiting couples working in the voluntary or third sector such as in nongovernmental organisations, human rights, civic organisations or the arts tended to reveal their cohabitation to their working colleagues more readily than those working in government-led organisations, public/private institutes and professional sectors.[55] In addition, the position they had in their work place mattered. I asked those participants who were unemployed at the time of the interview about the time when they had previously worked or studied.

Where They Work Matters

Five out of twelve heterosexual participants disclosed their cohabitation to most of their working colleagues, whilst another four participants told a couple of trusted co-workers. Except for the two (male) participants who saw their cohabitation as a premarital relationship, seven heterosexual participants who divulged their cohabitation to their work colleagues were working in NGOs or as postgraduate students in a feminist-friendly department. The remaining three interviewees did not tell any co-workers. These three participants who kept silent about their cohabitation were working in a public agency, a private company and a government-led organisation, respectively.

It was clear that where they worked and what kind of colleagues they had affected participants' motivation to tell colleagues and the degree of their disclosure. The

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[55] Most freelance workers are included in the professional sector.

people working in a civil organisation for human rights (Shim, Sinbi and Soran) commented that their colleagues were on the whole understanding and open-minded. Moreover, some of them said their co-workers were very similar to themselves. For example, Shim (HW, 32, w/Pony) said: 'when I worked in the centre (Korea Sexual Violence Centre) they were just like me. So, some of my colleagues were also cohabiting or had cohabited, though many of them married in the end.' Those participants who worked in an NGO or a feminist-friendly environment trusted their colleagues that they would not see them differently after disclosure of their cohabitation. This motivated my participants to reveal their cohabitation and generally the reaction was ok.

However, this was not the case for everyone. Sunyoung (HW, 29, w/Sarang), in particular, did not disclose her cohabitation to some of her postgraduate colleagues or to others because she worried about being stigmatized after disclosure.

> I didn't tell my fellow postgraduates about my cohabitation except for a few really close friends. I started worrying at some point if people might stigmatise me due the fact that I'm cohabiting with a boyfriend. I think, I could be trapped in an unexpected situation. They might judge me.

Sunyoung was studying in a less feminism-friendly department, compared to others such as Shim and Yuyu, and her previous experience of being judged by her colleagues seemed to make her unsure of saying that she cohabited. Sunyoung distinguished those colleagues she disclosed to from others to whom she did not say anything, describing them as 'close friends'.

A quarter of the heterosexual participants kept their cohabitation completely secret from their work colleagues; all of them were working in a public agency or in a professional sector with a high salary range. Considering how he decided whom to tell and not, Pony (HM, 33, w/Shim) said: 'it depends on whether I share my private relation. As the company is a workplace, I'm just busy talking with my colleagues about business.' Wonseok (HM, 36, w/Alice) and Alice (HW, 33, w/Wonseok) were more concerned about being gossiped about in their work place. Wonseok did not talk much about disclosing his cohabitation at his workplace because he was

freelance and thus he did not technically have immediate work colleagues. Alice seemed to be quite anxious about the possibility of her cohabitation being found out by work colleagues. She said that she did not even tell her work colleagues about the existence of her ex-boyfriend, because he was working in the same field as she.

> You know, I first met him where I worked. Although he moved to another company later, he still worked in the same field where I worked and this field is so limited. People would talk. I don't want others to know whom I've met.

While Alice was cohabiting with her ex-boyfriend, they went to their work place separately in order not to be found out, despite working in the same office. Moreover, they always prepared an excuse when out in public, for example, that they had met by chance when they went grocery shopping. At the time of the interview, Alice cohabited with Wonseok who worked in a different field from her, but she still did not disclose her cohabitation to her work colleagues.

> Telling my colleagues about my cohabitation may be alright, but maybe not. I may be in trouble after disclosing. […] Basically, I don't think Korean society welcomes cohabitation. I personally see there is nothing shameful about cohabitation, but I do think I'll get stressed if I reveal that I'm cohabiting with a man. People would talk, gossiping about me. […] I also think it would be a great disadvantage to me. The fact that I'm cohabiting with a man would become a yardstick for others to judge me. In this sense, it would never be an advantage for me.

Alice's account was very similar to Sunyoung's in terms of worrying about how she would be looked at by her colleagues. This seems to be a 'uniquely female experience', as Huang et al. (2011: 894) argue, that cohabiting women are under pressure from the sexual double standard, worrying about social disapproval, while few cohabiting men care about social stigma as women do.

Among the nine gay participants, three were working in gay-related NGOs, two were freelancers, one was working in a human rights organisation, another was working in

a public corporation and the remaining two were unemployed[56] at the time of the interviews. Those three working in the gay-related NGOs and the one working in the human rights organisation revealed their cohabitation to their work colleagues, whilst the other five participants had never disclosed their same-sex couple relationship.[57]

Jaekyoung (G, 41, w/Ahn), Leslie (G, 37, w/Jinseok) and Jeongyol (G, 35) disclosed their cohabitation to their work colleagues since they worked in an NGO for gay rights and all of their colleagues were gay. Both Jaekyoung and Leslie said that their colleagues were actually their friends and most of them congratulated them on their cohabitation. Garam (G, 34, w/Dio) was also able to disclose his gay identity and cohabitation to his work colleagues as he worked in an NGO for human rights. However, Jeongyol's case was slightly different because his partner was HIV-positive while Jeongyol was not.

> Hmm… The reaction when I told my colleagues that I'm going to cohabit with my partner was not very good, because, you know, my partner was not someone that one can easily meet in real life. Of course, some people congratulated me, but it was more like including worries. People around him [Jeongyol's partner], in particular, were more serious. They worried about my partner, saying to him that he is the one who will get all the blame if I get infected by him and that he has to take responsibility. I guess, it was quite a unique experience.

Despite working in a gay organisation for HIV-positive people's rights, Jeongyol was not fully welcomed as people expressed concern about him, his partner and their health. Yet, these concerns were not about the idea of cohabitation itself. It was about the HIV status of Jeongyol's partner. But, the longer they cohabitated, the more his colleagues and Jeongyol's partner's colleagues started to support the couple. This was because Jeongyol and his partner became role models for HIV-positive gays, sharing know-how and tips to avoid the risk of infection in a couple relationship.

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[56] The two unemployed participants had a professional job (doctor and dentist), and thus they were asked about their previous work period.
[57] Bud (G, 42) said that he had come out to his work colleagues when he had worked abroad, but had not done so since returning to work in Korea.

The other two participants, however, Dio (G, 29, w/Garam) and Bud (G, 42), did not disclose the nature of their cohabitation to their work colleagues and for several reasons. Firstly, they were freelancers so they technically did not have any immediate work colleagues. Furthermore, even if they had had colleagues, Dio and Bud did not want to take the risk of being seen differently and gossiped about after coming out. Dio said: 'I haven't come out to people yet. I just couldn't. I think I'm not ready for it. […] I'm still not free from people's eyes.' Bud also worried about the conservatism of Korean people, saying: 'I was out for six years while I worked abroad. But I haven't been out since I came back to Korea. You know what Korean people are like, gossiping and homophobic. So, at the time I worked in a hotel, I only came out to foreign work colleagues.' Though Bud was a freelance at the time of the interview, he talked about his experiences of working in a hotel. He said that he did not want to be gossiped about by other Koreans and that was why he only came out to foreign colleagues.

The other three participants who never disclosed their cohabitation to their work colleagues worked in the professional sector, such as a doctor or a researcher. Interestingly, they were also in the highest paid category and like heterosexuals in that category, never disclosed their cohabitation.

No lesbians in my study disclosed their cohabitation to their work colleagues. Only three out of fourteen lesbian participants said that they had come out once to their colleagues in the past because they thought their colleagues would understand them being a lesbian. The atmosphere of their work place influenced them to come out.

> I came out when I worked at 'IF', the feminist magazine. I told all the office workers. Ah, only some around my age, not those much older than me. (Soran: L, 31, w/Ray)

> When I did a part-time job temporarily in a publishing company for six months, I came out to my colleagues. (Ed: L, 33, w/Basa)

> I told my former work colleagues everything. They even came to celebrate us on our 500 days party. (Namul: L, 33, w/Jinny)

Both Soran and Namul came out to their former work colleagues since they worked at a magazine that was assumed to be generally liberal. Ed also came out once to her work colleagues when she worked part-time. Apart from those three participants, no lesbians disclosed their cohabitation to their work colleagues and in fact, most did not even consider doing so because they did not want their colleagues to be involved in their private life. However, Mim (L, 29, w/Choikang) was different. She explained:

> I'm studying in a very conservative department. The field [psychology] is so old-fashioned. Really. So conservative. At the Ehwa [women's] university I haven't met a feminist. I feel like I'm going mad. All Christian. I felt nothing, I mean I was just ok with hiding my lesbian relationship from my work colleagues when I worked in a company previously, because I didn't feel any sense of belonging there. I was totally fine with concealing myself from them as I just thought of the place as somewhere I'll get out of soon when I make enough money. But when I entered the postgraduate school, I wanted to be attached to and feel a sense of belonging there, but there was no one to talk with about my lesbian relationship. Some of my colleagues in the department even thought it awkward that I was living apart from my parents before I got married. The atmosphere is just that I should only leave my parents when I marry. And they often make me feel that I must get married. […] I'm so tired of pretending to be a heterosexual woman. That's the most difficult thing I have now. It seems so natural that they ask me when I'm going to marry and when I say to them I'll not get married, then they are just surprised, asking me 'why?'

Mim wanted to feel a sense of belonging to the department by coming out and sharing her private life with her colleagues. She envied me when I told her that one of the good things about studying abroad was that I was able to come out to my friends and colleagues. We talked a lot about having a sense of belonging where we want to be. In particular, Mim expected to be able to come out to her colleagues at Ehwa Women's University because it is known as one of the leading feminist

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universities. However, she soon realised that the psychology department was rather conservative and she did not feel safe coming out. Given that three heterosexual postgraduates (Shim, Yuyu and Sunyoung) disclosed their cohabitation to their department colleagues, though not to all their colleagues, the fact that no lesbian postgraduates (Mim and Ray) disclosed to their colleagues suggests that lesbians feel the least able to come out to their colleagues.

Money and Power Matter

Over half of the gay participants did not divulge the nature of their cohabitation to their work colleagues. Of this group, all were working in non-gay-friendly organisations and in professional sectors. One of the key reasons that they did not open up about their private life to their work colleagues was to do with money. Kenneth (G, 40) said:

> If it [my gay couple relationship] is revealed at my work place, would I be able to keep working there in the current Korean culture? Earning a living relies heavily on it [my work place]. Frankly speaking, I acknowledge that family and parents are important [in the issue of disclosure]. But I think, [disclosure in] the work place is the most important.

Kenneth was a professional researcher in a public institution that is presumably conservative. He did not think that he would be able to continue working in his workplace if his same-sex couple relationship was disclosed. He also commented that even if he quit work and tried to find another job at another institution, it would never be easy, given that people might blame him for his gay identity. He argued that causing trouble within his family by divulging his gay relationship was less problematic than having a problem at his workplace where he earned his living. He also worried about being gossiped about in his field of work so that his social position became vulnerable.

In contrast, Bud's (G, 42) partner seemed quite free from any coming-out anxiety, due to his powerful position in his work place. Bud told me about his partner:

In my partner's case, he came out as gay to the president of his company,
the representative director and his team members. They know that he has
a partner and we're living together. So, either the president or the
representative director often called me to get him home when he's drunk.
[…] But my partner had no negative effect from coming out to his work
colleagues because he has power in the company. He's in a position
where no one can offend him. People may talk about him behind his
back, but they can't say anything in front of him.

Bud described his partner as someone who had power in his company. He also stated
that his partner's coming out at his work place did not create any problems, since his
partner was in a relatively high position in the company. However, this appears to be
a very rare case. For instance, Ahn (G, 45, w/Jaekyoung) and Jinseok (G, 36,
w/Leslie) (unemployed at the time of the interview) used to work in the professional
sector as a doctor and a dentist respectively. Doctors and dentists are generally
regarded as high-status professional occupations in Korea. Nevertheless, they both
said that they had never disclosed their same-sex relationship to their work
colleagues. In this sense, Bud's partner's workplace appears to have been to some
extent gay-friendly, and that could secure Bud's partner from potential problems
after coming out.

4-1-5. Disclosure to Neighbours

None of my participants disclosed her/his cohabitation to their neighbours. This was
mainly because conversations/exchanges between neighbours in a city like Seoul are
not common in Korea. When my heterosexual interviewees talked with their
neighbours, they were usually assumed to be a married couple and they did not tell
them the truth. In the case of lesbian and gay participants, one of the couple was
usually introduced to their neighbours as either just a flatmate, close friend, work
colleague or cousin.

No (Heterosexual) Cohabitation in Their Minds

Only two heterosexual participants had experiences of talking with their neighbours
and there was no disclosure of cohabitation between them. Interestingly, the
experience of one lesbian participant (Ray) is discussed in this section because she

had an experience of chatting with her neighbour about her partner (Soran) and her former male cohabitee.

My participants reported that their neighbours usually seemed not to understand their cohabitation for what it was. Instead, it seemed to be instantly regarded as a married relationship, and same-sex couples' cohabitation was viewed as just a friends' flat-share. Although different-sex couples were sometimes asked by their neighbours whether they were married, there seemed to be no suspicion about the nature of the relationship by the neighbours regarding my lesbian and gay participants.

> In my personal experience, I think that older generations don't have a notion of cohabitation in their head. I once went to several house agencies with Ahreum and the grandfathers[58] just regarded us as husband and wife. […] I couldn't be bothered to say that we're not, but it was just like that. Even when Ahreum moved into my place, my neighbour simply said to me, 'oh, your bride!' There was not even a space to explain. In their minds, a man and a woman living together equals marriage. It seemed just inseparable. (Dongchi: HM, 30, w/Ahreum)

Dongchi talked about his experiences that his neighbours simply assumed he and Ahreum were married. As he mentioned, his neighbours seemed to understand the format of a woman and a man living together only as a conjugal relationship. However, if the neighbours had realised that they were not married, they would have gossiped and Dongchi and Ahreum could have been in trouble like Ray and Sunyoung.

Ray (L, 30, w/Soran) told me a very interesting story about her experience of having a conversation with her female neighbours who were curious about Soran (Ray's current partner) and her former male cohabitee. Before Ray became a couple with Soran and started living at Soran's home, Soran had had an ex-boyfriend who was living with her. By the time Soran and her boyfriend had cohabited for about three years, Soran realised that she was attracted to women and did not want to continue

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[58] In general, it is old men (of grandfathers' age) that work in a house agency in Korea.

her heterosexual relationship. They broke up, but continued to live together because Soran's ex-boyfriend needed time to find a house and she could not just kick him out. Since that point, Soran and her ex-boyfriend had lived together as flatmates, not as an intimate couple. In the meantime, Ray and Soran became closer and started living together. For about nine months the three of them (Ray, Soran and her ex-boyfriend) lived together, which was awkward according to Ray. She stated:

> You know, we three had been living together. And the two of them [Soran and her ex-boyfriend] had been living together before I moved into Soran's house. Their neighbours were still there. After I moved into Soran's home, I often said hello to our neighbours as I'm basically friendly with neighbours. So I got to know two neighbours living in the house in front and upstairs. One day, I sensed their eyes were very curious and suspicious. It was very bad. […] They said to me that they thought Soran and her ex-boyfriend were a married couple in the beginning, but then realised they were not. I don't know how they concluded that. They kept seeing them as odd. Then, we three lived together. How might they have seen us? I learnt on that day that Korean people still regard a man and a woman living together [unmarried] as strange.

Ray described what she experienced with her neighbours talking about their set-up. The three of them seemed to be watched by their neighbours for a long period. The neighbours instantly seemed to see Soran and her ex-boyfriend as a married couple just like Dongchi's neighbours did, though they wondered later.

Sunyoung also had an indirect experience with her neighbours when she was first cohabiting with her ex-boyfriend.

> I was too young. When his parents came to his house, I had to pack all my things and escape to a motel before they arrived. You know, I wasn't supposed to leave any trace. When they got to his house, the next door neighbour told his parents that a woman came in and out. His parents

asked him whether it's true and he just said that a female friend visited

him several times only for studying. Neighbours are such busybodies!

This case is slightly different from Dongchi's and Ray's. With Dongchi and Ray, their neighbours asked the cohabitees only whether they were married and it did not go further. However, Sunyoung's neighbours intruded to a much greater degree, informing her ex-boyfriend's parents of their son bringing a woman to his place. The neighbours seemed to have strong suspicion about Sunyoung and her ex-cohabitee because they looked too young to be married. The different-sex couples' experiences with their neighbours showed that these people saw a cohabiting couple as married. It reinforces marriage as norm in Korea.

The lesbian couples' experiences of neighbour disclosure were in significant contrast from those of the heterosexual participants. Their relationships were only considered by their neighbours in terms of being friends or something along the lines of close acquaintances. There were not many lesbian and gay participants who had talked with their neighbours and all of them noted that their neighbours might not know about them. Most participants said they would introduce their partner to their neighbour as just a friend, a work colleague or a relative, if they had to. Moreover, unlike the heterosexuals who just kept silent when they realised they were considered married, lesbians and gays had their own strategy and the most popular and common method was lying.

Inevitable Lies

Different-sex couples' cohabitation may be more likely to be noticed by their neighbours. Given that homosexuality is not acknowledged legally and socially in Korea, same-sex couples' cohabitation may generally not be seen as something intimate. Nevertheless, lesbian and gay interviewees tried very hard not to be 'found out' by their neighbours and some of them even prepared one or two scenarios to use in case they had to explain their partners' presence.

Bud (G, 42) was the one who most actively interacted with his neighbours among all the interviewees. He seemed to have his own strategies when having a chat with his

neighbours, depending on the degree of lasting relationship possibility. Bud who was a freelance writer said:

> I tend to be very careful about disclosing myself. I often tell others that I'm a married man, making up a story, transforming my partner into a woman. Or, I sometimes just say that I'm not married. I helped someone who I met at a farm recently and he kept asking me lots of questions like whether I was married, how old I am, what I do and whether the house is mine or not, where my hometown is, whether my parents are alive and who my family consists of. Really everything about me. It's so uncomfortable. It's not that I intended to lie, but to stop such annoying questions. I inevitably started to lie for my sake. If I think I might keep in touch with the neighbour, I would think about coming out. But if not, I would never reveal myself, I suppose. Particularly to old people […] I would be very careful about it.

Bud described his lie to his neighbour as a 'lie for his sake' in order to prevent being questioned. His worries about being found out by neighbours were evident. Such worries were even more apparent in the lesbian interviews.

There were no lesbian participants who interacted with their neighbours. Rather, they seemed to minimise engagement with their partners in their neighbourhood. There was often serious anxiety about being exposed to their neighbours. For example, Anna (L, 31, w/Tina) was very worried about being found out by her neighbours. She had opened her own little bistro (in partnership with her girlfriend) in her neighbourhood and her anxiety frequently showed during her interview. I first met her for the interview at her workplace and asked where we could talk. She looked for a space for some time and then asked me whether interviewing in the car would be alright. Once we sat in her friend's car, she asked me if I would agree to interview her with the car windows closed. She said:

> I'm sorry. I know it's hot here. But I live in this area and work here. I don't want any neighbours or passers-by to hear what I'll be talking

about. If anyone realizes that I'm a lesbian, I'd be in big trouble and my partner, too.

The temperature in the car indicated 34^0C at the time of the interview and both of us (Anna and me) sweated heavily. She was definitely anxious about the potential possibility of being 'found out' by her neighbours.

Upon reflection, I realized that the interview locations were quite distinctive for the heterosexual, gay and lesbian participants. During my fieldwork, the interview location was always chosen by my interviewees. Eleven out of the twelve heterosexual participants suggested that I interview them in a café near where they lived and one participant had an interview by chance on a camping site, which was also quite public. A third of the gay participants (three out of nine) specifically asked me to come to their office to interview them and the other six gay participants did not mind being interviewed in a café near their home or workplace. In contrast to the heterosexual and gay interviewees, half of the lesbians particularly asked me to interview them in a private place to circumvent the potential risk of being found out by their neighbours. As a result, three lesbians were interviewed in their office, two in a car and two in a seminar room I hired as they required. Given that almost all heterosexual participants and two thirds of the gay ones did not worry about having an interview in a public place near where they lived, the fact that half of the lesbians (seven out of fourteen) requested that I should interview them in a private place to avoid any suspicions by their neighbours may demonstrate that lesbians felt the most pressured in terms of being out to their neighbours.

4-2. Analysis of the Disclosure Pattern by Sexual Identity

In this section I shall discuss whether there was a specific pattern in disclosing one's cohabitation to others, and how these were differentiated by sexual identity among the heterosexuals, gays and lesbians. As Figure 5 shows below, a particular disclosure pattern related to the interviewees' sexual identity emerged.
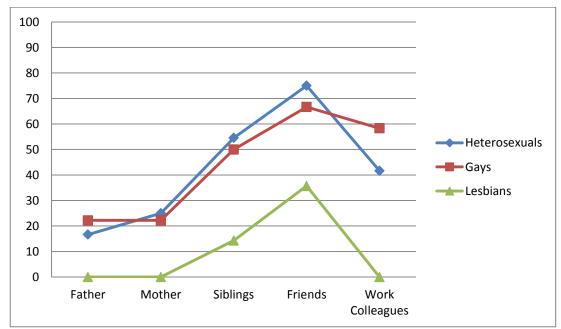
Figure 5. Disclosure Pattern by Sexual Identity

Source: Interview data (2012).

Figure 5 shows the extent to which participants talked about their relationship to people around them by sexual identity. The horizontal axis indicates the five categories[59] of people to whom disclosure might be made: father, mother, siblings, friends and work colleagues. The vertical axis points to the numbers who did tell these people as a percentage of the total number of interviewees. I used percentages rather than the actual numbers of my participants because the total number of interviewees was different for each sexual identity group (twelve heterosexuals, nine gays and fourteen lesbians) and thus it would not make sense to compare them in absolute numbers.

Figure 5 has two important features. First, all participants, regardless of sexual identity, had similar disclosure patterns: the group to which participants declared their cohabitation the most was their friends, followed by siblings, work colleagues, mothers and then fathers. This shows that cohabiting couples, irrespective of their

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[59] The category of 'Neighbours' is excluded from Figure 5, because it turned out that none of my participants disclosed their cohabitation to their neighbours. In addition, the 'Friends' group refers to 'heterosexual friends' only. When interviewing heterosexual participants about disclosing to their friends, there was an implicit/explicit understanding between the researcher and the researched that friends meant heterosexual friends. When some of interviewees were talking about disclosing to their lesbian or gay friends, this was clearly indicated. Moreover, all the lesbian and gay participants disclosed their cohabitation to their lesbian and gay friends, and thus this case is also excluded from Figure 5.

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sexual identity, were least concerned about disclosing their cohabitation to their friends, that is their peers, despite it being taboo. Moreover, Figure 5 demonstrates that all groups were most stressed about revealing their cohabitation to their parents. Despite the small samples in each sexual identity group, it is indicative that cohabiting couples in general disclosed their cohabitation to their friends the most and to their parents the least. In this context, I would argue that my participants used the 'passing' strategy (Goffman 1963) the most when they were with their parents and the least with their friends. Discussing stigma, Goffman briefly defines 'passing' as 'the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self' (1963: 42). Moreover, he terms 'stigma' as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting', asserting the importance that it needs to be interpreted through the lens of 'a language of relationships, not attributes' (1963: 3). As explained previously, cohabitation is stigmatised in Korea. Yet, this stigma took different forms for hetero- and homosexual cohabitants: in the case of the heterosexuals, it hyper-visibilized the sexual nature of the relationship, whilst in the case of the homosexuals it did not signify sexual relations at all. A woman and a man living together were almost automatically seen as either a married couple or a cohabiting couple, whereas lesbian or gay cohabiting couples were not even perceived as couples.

Therefore the passing strategy was employed differently by my heterosexual and my homosexual participants. The heterosexuals largely used three tactics: first, declaring that they lived alone; second, remaining silent in the face of others' assumption that they were married; and thirdly, stating that their girl-/boyfriend was only visiting, not living there. On the other hand, lesbian and gay interviewees deployed slightly different tactics from the heterosexuals. Apart from lying and saying that they lived alone, they described their partner to others as a close friend, a work colleague, a relative or just a flatmate. Thus heterosexual couples tended to conceal the very fact that they were cohabiting, unless they implicitly agreed with others in seeming to be married, while same-sex couples did not necessarily have to completely hide the basic information that they were living together, since their same-sex couple relationship was not even imagined as an intimate relation. Nonetheless, it may be that lesbian and gay couples need more 'acting' (Plummer 1975) in everyday life to wear a mask that they are only friends, not an intimate couple, than different-sex couples do, because homosexuality can be more risky when revealed in Korea than

heterosexuals' cohabitation. Thus, strategies of disclosure were deployed to varying degrees by same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples.

The second important aspect of Figure 5 is that the pattern of heterosexual and gay participants' disclosure was very consistent. Overall, lesbian participants disclosed much less than either heterosexuals or gay men. This suggests that lesbians were the most oppressed both by their gender as well as their sexual identity. Mim's (L, 29, w/Choikang) case is a good example of this:

> Before cohabitation, when I was about to live independently from my parents, I told a few people around me. Of course, I didn't even breathe a word about cohabiting with my partner. Not a word about it. When I worked at a company, my team leader said to me: 'I really think of you like my daughter. Wouldn't your parents be worried about you? Blah blah blah...' I tried to figure out what he was worried about. I realized that he was worried in case I had sex with a man. They only worried if I had sex, I think. The ideology of chastity. Really. Men are relatively free from it, aren't they? […] What is more ridiculous was that older women in their 20s or 30s [in my university] had similar thoughts as the men. For them, it [living independently from my parents] was just deviance. The right order was to get married directly. Given that living apart from one's parents without marrying got that reaction, it's pointless saying anything about cohabitation.

Mim had told only a few people around her about her plan to live independently from her parents. People's reaction was quite surprising. Young women as well as middle-aged men were concerned about her living alone and Mim sensed that their worries arose from the ideology of chastity that is applied to oppress women. This kind of stress on chastity in relation to women was often referred to in other interviews. Mim had to cope with people's general perception about being a heterosexual woman, while at the same time concealing her lesbian identity. This double burden of dealing with one's woman-ness as well as lesbian-ness might result in the lowest degree of disclosing lesbian cohabitation.

4-3. Analysis of the Disclosure Pattern by Gender

In this section, I focus on whether gender affected disclosure pattern among my interviewees. To examine how widely fe/male cohabitants disclosed their couple relationship to others, the number of interviewees who let others know about their cohabitation was counted and graphed, distinguished by gender (see Figure 6).
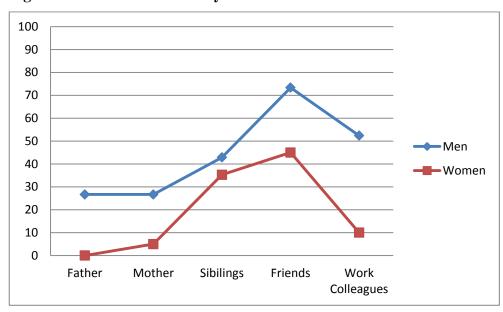
Figure 6. Disclosure Pattern by Gender

Source: Interview data (2012).

Figure 6 shows a considerable gap between women and men across all groups. Gender mattered in disclosure patterns, with men being generally more likely to disclose than women. The order of whom interviewees disclosed their cohabitation to turned out to be almost same as the disclosure pattern identified in terms of sexual identity (see Figure 5): friends, siblings, work colleagues, mother and father were disclosed to in that order. What is noticeable in Figure 6 is that women's disclosure to their parents was significantly lower than men's.

Such gendered attitudes were also prevalent in western countries (Lautenschlaeger 1972; Macklin 1972; Arafat and Yorburg 1973; Jackson 1983; Peterman et al. 1974; Huang et al. 2011). Macklin (1972), one of the leading researchers who studied cohabitation and women in the early 1970s, states that one of the major concerns of her female interviewees were the potential problems with their parents. In her interviews, most girls tried to conceal their cohabitation by distorting the truth or

making up stories due to a fear of discovery or rejection, while most boys' parents knew about their son's cohabitation and boys themselves also did not seem to care about their relationship being revealed to their parents. Macklin's study is largely consistent with my findings concerning heterosexuals. Jackson has also developed a theory that cohabitees' attitude to disclosing their relationship with others tends to evolve from 'concealment' through 'pretence' to 'openness' and the way of dealing with others at each stage varies, particularly with parents (1983: 44). Jackson notes how cohabiting couples were likely to conceal their relationship in anticipation of parental disapproval. This became transformed into two secondary adaptations: 'segregation' and 'conjointness' in Jackson's (1983: 45) terms. His interview data showed certain extreme segregated actions including separate telephones, separate mail boxes in a single apartment complex and even separate commuting between home and work, so that those involved could keep their cohabitation secret from their work place as well as from family, particularly parents.

Although the first two strategies (using separate phones and mail boxes) was not mentioned in my data, the last strategy, where couples commute separately, was discussed in my interview with Alice. She said that she had kept her cohabitation with her ex-boyfriend (not Wonseok) whom she met in the same company secret until they broke up because she was concerned about being gossiped about by others working with her. She said: 'you know, the field I'm working in is so small that everyone would know who I've met if anyone noticed it. I don't want to be bothered by such gossip.'

Cohabiting couples also developed conjoint strategies in Jackson's (1983) interviews. This meant that a cohabiting couple set up specific rules that when the home phone rang for example, only the female cohabitee answered it and when the man was alone at home, the phone would remain unanswered. Despite these tactics of 'segregation' and 'conjointness', cohabiting couples' concealment was often destroyed by surprise visits from their parents or other family members. These caused a concealed relationship to develop to pretence or to become open. A similar situation occurred in several cases among my lesbian and gay interviewees as well as the straight ones. When parents visited, a few of my participants (two heterosexuals, two gays and two lesbians) said that they had to move and hide their partner's stuff

in a wardrobe and in storage, while their partner would go somewhere else until their parents had left. Interestingly, most men who had experienced this moment of panic a couple of times either then declared their cohabitation to their family and parents or told them not to come anymore. In contrast, most women either started making up a story that they lived with a flatmate or senior work colleague or just kept the relationship concealed.

One of the most extreme cases was Ray (L, 30, w/Soran). She had lived in a small single room near her university and, even after she started cohabiting with her ex-girlfriend, she continued to pay for the other room due to her fear of her parents' surprise visits. In fact, she kept paying for the room until her current cohabitee (Soran) asked her to stop wasting money. Macklin (1972) also describes similar findings in her research. Some of her female interviewees kept their rooms in anticipation of their parents' potential surprise visit, while few boys did so. Although Ray's case does not entirely correspond to Macklin's findings due to the fact that Macklin's research was based on heterosexual interviewees while Ray was a lesbian, there seems to be a certain point where heterosexual women's and lesbians' behaviour intersects. It may be worth noting that Ray's experience which actually occurred in Korea in the late 2000s also happened to women in America in the early 1970s (see Macklin 1972).

Jackson (1983) found that cohabitation was viewed differently by parents according to their child's sex. He argued that when a couple's cohabitation was revealed, the attitude 'boys will be boys' was adopted by boys' parents, whereas women were required to justify their behaviour and conduct (Jackson 1983: 48). However, heterosexuals' unmarried living together and same-sex couples' cohabitation have become normalised in many societies, particularly in western ones (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990; Axinn and Thornton 2000; Bumpass and Lu 2000; Barlow and James 2004; Manning and Cohen 2012). Ironically, however, it is also simultaneously true that there is a 'persistent cultural norm of a sexual double standard: Although cohabiting men feel free to enjoy sexual relations outside marriage, cohabiting women risk social stigma and loss of self-respect' (Huang et al. 2011: 894).

4-4. Analysis of the Disclosure Pattern by Sexual Identity and Gender

Drawing on Figures 5 and 6, this section analyses the disclosure pattern of each sexual identity group in order to distinguish the similarities and differences between heterosexual women and men, lesbians and gays.
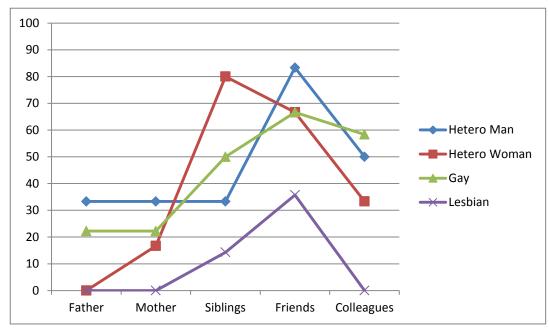
Figure 7. Disclosure Pattern by Sexual Identity and Gender

Source: Interview data (2012).

Figure 7 illustrates the degree of which participants disclosed that they were cohabiting to their parents, siblings, friends and work colleagues, differentiated by gender and sexual identity: heterosexual women, heterosexual men, lesbians and gays. This figure shows the similarities and differences between the four gendered groups. On the whole, couples were more likely to disclose their cohabitation to their friends and colleagues than their family members. Notably, there were gendered differences among the different-sex and same-sex cohabitants. Heterosexual women were more concerned about disclosing their cohabitation to their parents than heterosexual men. Similarly, gay men revealed the nature of their cohabitation to their parents more than lesbians did. This suggests that women regardless of their sexual identity were more worried about their parents' disapproval than men. This pattern was present in the same way with the participants' friends and colleagues. Women appear to be more anxious about social disapproval than men. Almost all of my participants were more concerned about the views from their work colleagues

than their friends, given that all, except the gays, disclosed their cohabitation less to their colleagues than to their heterosexual friends. What is interesting in Figure 7 is that the gendered pattern shows a discrepancy of disclosure to their siblings in the heterosexual interviewees. It was because, as I discussed previously, male heterosexual participants were worried that their siblings, particularly their sisters, might inform their parents of their cohabitation, while this was hardly found among the female heterosexual interviewees.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored whether cohabiting couples disclosed their cohabitation to others and investigated whom they did/did not reveal it to and why they did so. In this, prominent differences appeared according to an individual's gender and sexual orientation. Male interviewees (both heterosexual and gay men) much more readily disclosed their cohabitation to others than females. Heterosexuals appeared to be the most disclosing, followed by gays and lesbians. On the whole, my participants relied on their friends the most and their parents the least in terms of talking about their cohabitation relationship. My findings suggest that both one's gender and sexual identity affect the degree of disclosure of cohabitation to significant others (parents, siblings, friends and work colleagues).

Chapter 5. Living Cohabitation in Contemporary Korea

Introduction

In the previous two analysis chapters, I explored how my research participants entered into cohabitation and the extent to which they disclosed their cohabitation to others such as their family (parents and siblings), friends, work colleagues and neighbours, highlighting the distinct patterns by gender and sexual identity. In this chapter, I inquire into the cohabiting couples' reported experiences of living together, that is the dailiness of their lives together and its meaning as they articulated it in terms of particular practices. I focus first on the meaning of home for the cohabiting couples, particularly considering how they viewed their home and how it specifically functioned in their cohabitation. Secondly, I explore the notion of stability, which my participants saw as the key advantage in cohabiting. Following this, I look at the cohabitants' relationship with their quasi mother-in-law. I then consider how cohabiting couples divided their housework and finances. I also discuss the meaning of having pets as it emerged in the interviews. Finally, I examine the importance of friends for cohabiting couples. In doing so, I argue that the couples reported doing cohabitation differently, depending on their gender and sexual orientation.

5-1. The Meaning of Home

Home is an essential space where couples practise cohabitation. Some differentiate a house from a home, pointing out that a house can become a home when it is filled with a range of layers of the occupants' memories, feelings and experiences derived from living in that space (Gorman-Murray 2007). Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) underline that home is a special site where family practices between intimate individuals (usually family members) take place. For them, this is the key difference from a mere house. Both of these positions are relevant when considering my interviewees, because the vast majority of my participants emphasized that their home was very important in their cohabitation and they also engaged in family practices, either deliberately or inadvertently. In this sense, this chapter focuses on

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what made the cohabiting couples find their home significant, how having a home influenced my interviewees and how they grew to do family at home.

5-1-1. Enjoying Everyday Activities Together

When asked what the best feature of home was, many participants pointed to 'practices of intimacy' (Jamieson 1998) that they could do at home. Most of those who had lived with their parents before cohabitating talked about going to 'love hotels' or motels to have sex with their girlfriend or boyfriend. Going to such places is costly, as Garam and many others noted, but more importantly, most of my interviewees were concerned about something else:

> We went to motels almost every day before living together. Of course, we spent too much money on them. But you know, it's sometimes not very comfortable when the receptionist looked us up and down as we were two men. (Garam: G, 34, w/Dio)

> Having a home is more convenient. Think about it. What if I met someone I know when I was around a motel with my boyfriend? People would simply think that I was there to have sex. I don't care about that, to be honest. But I just don't want other people to know about my private business. (Alice: HW, 33, w/Wonseok)

> Particularly in the very beginning, I wanted to touch her every minute and every second. But I couldn't do it outside in public, could I? I also didn't like going to motels as they're usually filthy. And you know, two women around a motel don't look normal in Korea. (Anna: L, 34, w/Tina)

Although they were all different in terms of their gender and sexual identity, all of these interviewees seemed worried about being seen by their acquaintances when they were near a motel. This similarity was due to the fact that a motel in Korea generally implies a place where couples go to have sex. This was problematic for my participants as they were not legitimate couples from a conventional Korean

perspective. Therefore, a home seemed to be the best place for those who did not want to be open about their couple relationship or sexual identity.

For those who did not come out as lesbian or gay, moreover, home was perceived as a crucial site for constructing their sexual identity positively. As Gorman-Murray (2007) notes, home is important in terms of identity formation and expressing one's identity. Some of my participants found it different to live with their parents, whether or not they came out to them. After they started living with their partner, however, all of them said that they were much happier than at their parents' house, not only because they were comfortable with someone they loved and who knew them to be gay, but also because they could gain emotional support from their cohabiting partner through the practices of intimacy at home. Jaekyoung (G, 41, w/Ahn) said:

> When my family didn't know about my sexual identity, the image of home was comfortable, warm and supportive for me. But after they became aware of me being gay, the home became something frightening. Although I didn't have much communication or trouble with them, they were still heterosexuals and didn't try to understand me, and thus I was just isolated from them. I was so stressed by them. […] But after I started cohabiting with Ahn, [home] I gradually recovered the previous image of home where I can relax, stay safe and comfortable. We supported each other a lot and I felt that I was understood thoroughly by him. The way he saw me, the way he talked to me, the way he treated me, everything was just telling me that he understood me and wanted to embrace me. […] In doing so, I found myself having become really confident, not just pretending to be, but truly proud of myself as gay.

Jaekyoung recounted how the image of home changed from a frightening place to a supportive and caring site and how he became confident in himself as gay. Doing intimacy between the couple was not only about sex, but also involved how one was looked at, spoken to and behaved with one's partner. It helped Jaekyoung and many other lesbian and gay participants strengthen their self-esteem as gays or lesbians.

Being oneself and being understood were also key issues to doing intimacy for different-sex couples. Sinbi (HW, 38, w/Cogito) said:

> To me, home is where I can free myself from the social person. So, I don't usually take a shower, don't brush my teeth and don't wash my face at home when I don't have to go out like on weekends. […] In addition, I do lots of silly things. For example, I ask Cogito to carry me on his back at home, or I just cling to his arm. He seemed quite surprised the first time I did that sort of thing. But he seems alright now, playing with me well. I guess, he was surprised because I kind of look professional outside while working and suddenly do something very childish at home. The gap might have seemed huge. But you know, people just show the bottom of themselves to their partner after some point, don't they? […] When he plays with me despite all the silly things, I feel so loved, supported and stable. Doing little things together between a couple, I mean, being able to do childish things at home is one of the important functions with which home can provide us.

Sinbi expressed home as where she could 'show the bottom' of herself to her partner. By doing childish things at home with her partner that she would not do when she was with her friends, acquaintances or work colleagues, Sinbi seemed to be fully understood by her partner. For Sinbi and Jaekyoung home functioned as where one can be one's 'real self' without having to be concerned about how one is seen by other people.

Cohabiting couples doing intimacy at home was reported as very important for my participants, since almost all of my interviewees, whether in different-sex or same-sex couples, were worried about having their relationship discovered by others. However, home was also often described as an important place where cohabiting couples could enjoy their friends who know the nature of their couple relationship and this is discussed next.

5-1-2. Enjoying a Social Life with Friends

A number of cohabiting couples, particularly the lesbian and gay ones, reported that being able to host a party at home for their friends was one of the good things about having a home. Lesbians or gays in Korea can meet their friends at a pub or a restaurant, but they have to be careful what they talk about if they do not want to attract unwanted attention in public. Although there are many lesbian and gay clubs or bars in Seoul, these places may not necessarily be a good place for those people wanting a quiet environment. Older lesbians and gays may also feel uncomfortable with these venues because they are usually considered spaces for younger people. The same-sex cohabiting couples in my study discussed needing their home in order to have a social life with their lesbian and gay friends. It allowed them to articulate their lesbian and gay identities. Both Mim (L, 29, w/Choikang) and Choikang (L, 33, w/Mim) described the first anniversary party they hosted at home with their friends. Although they only expected to enjoy their day with their friends, the result of the party was more than that. Choikang said:

> We didn't expect much. You know, we just wanted to show our friends
> that we were still living together as they knew that we fought very often.
> I'm sure they were wondering whether we were still in a relationship.
> [laugh] […] Quite a lot of people came. […] After they left, we felt great.
> Really great. Reading the little letters they left, we almost cried. I reckon,
> we felt like some kind of family. You know, heterosexual couples get
> huge congratulations by others when they have a wedding ceremony. But
> we don't have such thing, do we? […] You know, the kind of recognition
> of others that we're a couple and doing great together. I think that was
> what we felt very strongly from the party.

As Choikang recounted, hosting a party at home was not only about spending time with their friends, but also, more importantly, about obtaining support and recognition as a lesbian cohabiting couple. As discussed in Chapter 4, in a society like Korea, where proscription against homosexuality is serious, same-sex couples are not likely to disclose their couple relationship or their sexual identity very readily. As a couple, therefore, they lack recognition not only legally but also socially. Consequently, having a party at home with their friends functions very

importantly in terms of affirming their couple relation and receiving emotional support from their guests (Gorman-Murray 2007).

Jeongyol (G, 35) had a similar experience as Choikang, but in terms of supporting other gays. He said that both he and his partner made a point of taking care of other gays, particularly younger ones:

> We're very eager to talk to other people, wondering whether they're ok. So, we often invite those we worry about and feed them, listening to their worries and giving them advice. […] When someone doesn't have a place to stay, for a time we even put them up in one of our rooms. If we lived in Seoul, we would've hosted a party every day. I think, both of us began feeling kind of a responsibility after we started cohabiting that we should look after other people. You know, we have a home where we can talk with other people, we can invite other people to listen to their difficulties, and we can do something helpful for others. Every festive day, we're really busy cooking things and giving them away to others. I think we feel happy when we help others and we see them feeling happy from our help.

The meaning of Korean festive days is important here. As briefly discussed in Chapter 4, there are two main national festive days in Korea, New Year's Day and Thanksgiving Day. These are generally family events. Lesbians and gays in particular find these festive days difficult for two main reasons. Firstly, because of the pressure to visit their natal family, lesbians and gays feel excluded since they are unable to bring their partner. At the same time, if they decide not to attend these family days, most will also feel the absence of a family. In such cases, Jeongyol and many others gather together at home with their friends, doing similar things that heterosexuals usually do, such as cooking and eating certain things and playing traditional games. In doing so, same-sex couples seemed to resolve the lack of a natal familial context.

In contrast to the lesbians and gays, different-sex couples hardly showed any desire to have a social life with their friends in private, for example by hosting a party at

home. This clearly relates to the issue of disclosure of cohabitation. Wonseok (HM, 36, w/Alice), for instance, said that he asked his friends not to visit his home after he started living with Alice because they did not want to reveal their cohabitation:

> Most of my friends are married men. So, when it's too late after drinking, they often had a sleepover at mine. But I had to tell them that they couldn't come to my home anymore after Alice moved in. I just lied to them that my girlfriend came to my house almost every day because her work place is close to my place, but far from where she lives.

Wonseok's excuse to his friends derived purely from the fact that he did not want to disclose his cohabitation to his friends. Where either of a heterosexual couple chose not to reveal their cohabitation to friends, the couple tended not to have a social life at home with their friends. This suggests that heterosexual couples, compared to lesbian and gay cohabiting couples, did certain practices at home differently in their daily life.

5-2. Doing Family at Home

Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan note that 'home is a crucial site where the tie between the doing of family (or the couple) and the performance of heterosexuality are linked' (2001: 99). In this sense, the idea of home in connection with the concept of the heterosexual family seems inseparable. In my interview data, however, the same applied to non-heterosexual people as well as to heterosexuals. In fact, I found that all my participants engaged in doing family practices in their home and these were often quite explicit in terms of emotional stability, accepting and defying familial roles, dealing with the division of housework and finance and having a pet.

5-2-1. Gaining a Sense of Stability

A main theme my participants reported was a sense of stability. Before moving on to analysing stability in cohabitation, I want to define what exactly I mean by 'stability'. My participants spoke of 'emotional stability' and 'feeling stable'. In other words, stability for them was an affective issue. It did not relate primarily to how long the relationship had lasted (see Bumpass and Sweet 1989) but to the emotional state the relationship evoked. It is in this sense that I use the term

'stability'. When I asked my interviewees about the advantages of cohabiting, the most frequent answer was gaining a 'sense of stability'. Two thirds of heterosexuals (eight out of twelve) and gays (six out of nine) and twelve out of fourteen lesbians said that being able to have a sense of stability was the biggest advantage of cohabitation. For example:

> When people talk of a sense of stability in a couple relationship, there is a specific area that gives stability to individuals. Given that we can feel we have a safe and solid partnership-like relationship in cohabitation, it makes me feel stable. (Ahreum: HW, 30, w/Dongchi)

> I think, living together has a huge influence on one's emotional stability. […] It is the biggest advantage of cohabitation, I suppose. (Kenneth: G, 40)

> I think I desired love so much. It was a big deal for me. Stability. I'd had bad relationships when dating from my early 20s. Short and odd dating relationships. As far as I remember, I'd never had a stable relationship. It was easy to meet someone to start, but keeping the relationship was difficult. When I met someone, I'd always be anxious if she would leave me. So, I've wanted to have a stable relationship and I believed that living together is more stable than just dating. Cohabiting became my dream. (Mim: L, 29, w/Choikang)

As seen here, 'stability', described in terms of 'emotional stability' or 'feeling stable', was considered the key advantage of cohabitation in the interviews. Yet, this advantage of cohabitation raises the question: how does cohabitation give cohabiting couples stability? Given that my participants talked about their 'sense of stability' in various ways, there were two sub-themes, namely 'internal stability', that is emotional stability, and a certain 'practical stability', derived from external factors, such as the dailiness and routine of cohabiting.

Firstly, the majority of my interviewees said that the fact itself that they were living 'together' gave them emotional and psychological stability. That is, there was always

someone to take care of, wait for and come back to one. Hence, they were neither physically alone nor psychologically lonely.

> Dio is always at home as he's a freelance. He always waits for me when I come back home. And I talk to him in the evening about what I did in the day and he listens to me. Having someone who is always waiting for me is just great, isn't it? (Garam: G, 34, w/Dio)

> I was always lonely wherever I was, at home or outside with my friends. But now, I'm not lonely. I always wake up and sleep with Garam. We chat a lot when he comes back home. I'm just so happy and feel stable as I'm not alone. (Dio: G, 29, w/Garam)

The fact of cohabiting gave rise to the participants' sense of togetherness. Such feelings of togetherness were expressed in terms of feeling settled, supported and cared for. For example:

> My Seoul life would've been very very depressing and frustrating if I had no one I could rely on. I sometimes depended on my ex-boyfriends [cohabitants] financially and sometimes psychologically. […] Although I kind of escaped from my family towards a bigger world, I've always missed my parents. Not everyone was nice, but I reckon I should admit that there was definitely one good thing in cohabitation, which was there was someone I could rely on, like I used to rely on my parents. (Sunyoung: HW, 29, w/Sarang)

> I had no one looking after me since my parents died early. I and my sisters were separated, living at my uncle's or aunt's. I always felt like I didn't have any back-up. But after I started cohabiting with my partner, I felt I had my own supporter who can give me unconditional back-up. (Bud: G, 42)

I was once kidnapped[60] when I was 10 years old. […] After the three-year kidnap, I've always felt unstable and I thought my family was ruined because of me. My mom got cancer while she was looking for me. […] As I was internally unstable, I'd sought stability all the time. And I now feel I'm taken care of by Ed emotionally when I'm at home with her. (Basa: L, 38, w/Ed)

Many of my participants emphasized their sense of togetherness derived from living together and having someone to look after them, akin to their parents, in particular. In this respect, one might argue that the cohabiting partner replaced the empty space where the parents used to be and their replacement of care for their partner produced emotional stability by the (re-)doing of family. The emotional stability which people gain from their parents (Sandler et al. 1991), from their family's routine activities (Israel and Roderick 2001), from the meaning of their home (Holdsworth and Morgan 2005) and from carrying out certain family practices (Morgan 2011), has been widely researched. As some of my participants noted, emotional attachment to one's parents is very important, not least in Korean society where one continues to have close ties to one's family and parents as an adult. When that relation is missing, for example through lack of time or because the parents have died, people often experience a serious emptiness. In the cases of Sunyoung, Bud and Basa, their cohabiting partners filled this space.

This theme of gaining emotional stability from 'doing family' was not only present in the discussion about the partner as a replacement for one's parents, but also in talk about the dailiness and routine of one's life:

We've come to have a strong bond with each other in living together, sharing our routine life for five years. […] Living in the same house, with the same person and over five years has created a number of bonds between us and that is the strong bond we have and that is the stability I have. (Sarang: HM, 29, w/Sunyoung)

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60 This kind of abduction is not common at all in Korea, and Basa's experience, about which I know little since she did not want to talk about it is highly unusual. The point here is that Basa tried to explain to me why she was keen to have stability in a family(-like) relationship.

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One of the key features in the sense of stability, I think, it's the fact that I've got used to my partner. […] We've changed a lot but also repeated things a lot, too, whether they're good or bad. Such repetition becomes a routine and I think it makes me feel stable. Maybe because I feel I can predict him? I don't know. (Jaekyoung: G, 41, w/Ahn)

All the anxiety, worries and instability became routine. I mean, in a good way. […] When Soran came back home very late like 4am every Friday after dancing [Tango], I went crazy because I was so worried about her. She'd never picked up my call and never texted me back. But now, she gives me a couple of calls or texts to let me know that she's alright and I also enjoy every Friday on my own at home. So, that's what I meant, the worries have become routinized in a good way. It may not sound like it makes sense, but the routinized worries help me to feel stable. (Ray: L, 30, w/Soran)

In slightly different ways these three accounts point to the fact that stability was related to 'routine'. My interviewees discussed how their routines were created and how these caused them to have a sense of stability. Sarang in particular talked about the amount of time and space he had shared with his girlfriend. Jaekyoung emphasized how actions had become repeated and routine since cohabitating, with his partner becoming more predictable. Ray too pointed out that routinization helped to relieve her worries and made her feel stable.

Routine is closely related to family practices. Morgan (2011: 80) argues that 'family practices are conducted *within* time and space and involve the *use* of time and space' (italics in original), importantly through routines. Israel and Roderick (2001) found a positive connection between stability and the importance of family activities and routines in public (outside the home) as well as in private (inside the home). My participants certainly reported that they obtained a sense of stability by replicating family practices in creating and sustaining routines of interaction. For example, Dongchi (HM, 30, w/Ahreum) said:

Cohabitation is just different from temporary stays. My ex-girlfriend used to stay at my house so often. You could say, it was almost like living together. But basically, she lived with her parents and stayed at mine for dating, not for living. Of course, she didn't pay the rent nor cared about problems in my house, because she didn't have any responsibility for my house. Although we stayed at my house most of the time, I was the only person who took care of it. But it's now become our place since we started cohabiting. Everything was joined by living together. The household became joint and the finance was also joint. We rely on each other, paying the rent and bills together and discuss all the matters related to the house. The structure of living together makes us do things together practically.

Comparing his past experience with his ex-girlfriend in his house to his current situation, Dongchi indicated that cohabitation was rather different from temporary stay-overs. Cohabitation necessitated assuming responsibility for the shared house due to the fact that household and finances were integrated, whereas that was not the case when partners only stayed intermittently. Many other participants also argued that they had stability as a result of the joint activities involved in cohabitation. This became clear in Garam's (G, 34, w/Dio) interview:

After I proposed to Dio to cohabit and he accepted, I told my friends, 'we've decided to join our households'. We became a little community that shares finance, household and housework. While Dio was just staying at mine in the beginning, doing housework and taking care of the house were down to me. But from the moment I proposed to him, the space was going to be decorated by us together. […] Cohabitation is, in other words, 'joining our household'. It meant for us that we were to share our future life. It's just structurally different from simply living together. […] As the notion of 'family' has been so polluted, I don't want to use it, but I feel like family. When I proposed to him, it was like a heterosexual proposal of marriage.

Garam emphasized the 'joining of households' in his discussion of cohabitation, demarcating it from 'simply living together'. In his description, joining households implied sharing their life as well as sharing the responsibility for the house, such as paying the bills and doing housework. Moreover, Garam connected his cohabitation to the concept of heterosexual marriage and to family. The general idea of family is very heteronormative in Korea and is grounded in marriage registration with a spectacular wedding ceremony. One of the fundamental questions about the issue of family and marriage in same-sex couple relationships is whether it is necessary to replicate heterosexuals' tradition. Opponents of this issue state that advocating for homosexual marriage can be seen as strengthening patriarchy and reproducing the heteronormative family. At the same time, others feel that homosexual couples should have the same rights as heterosexuals (see Na Youngjeong et al. 2014). For Garam the term 'family' had been heterosexualised and traditionalised, hence he hesitated to use it. He tried 'joining households' as an alternative, but his basic model remained that of heterosexual marriage. In a way, Garam both sought to appropriate that model and to resist it.

The relation between cohabitation and the traditional idea of marriage and family was also evident in Namul's (L, 33, w/Jinny) interview: 'with Jinny, I felt like I've got my own family, I mean, our own family. I would say, we became stable after living together.' She linked her cohabitation to 'having her own family' and described the relationship between her and her partner as 'becoming stable'. This triangular connection between cohabitation, stability and family-like relation was articulated in the majority of my interviews, particularly by lesbians and gays. The notion of (emotional) stability as a central benefit in living together was commonplace among all the sexual identity groups; however, linking their cohabitation to forming a family was mostly mentioned by lesbians and gays while a considerable number of heterosexual couples saw their cohabitation more in terms of either a precursor, or an alternative, to marriage. This may be partly because different-sex couples can choose between cohabitation and marriage, whereas same-sex couples in Korea have only one option, namely cohabitation. Thus, lesbian and gay couples might have sought to form a family-like relation more than non-homosexual couples because cohabitation signified a somewhat different option for them.

Stability was to some extent experienced differently by my participants according to their sexual identity. Heterosexuals tended to engage in *marriage-like* practices, whereas lesbian and gay couples seemed to be eager to do *family* practices. The phrase 'family practices' is a sociological term derived from David Morgan's (1996) *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Of course, the word 'practices' was already widely used in general as well as in sociological academe before, and in addition, as Morgan himself acknowledges (Morgan 2011), the term 'family practices' was also mentioned prior to 1996 in Adams (1994) though in a slightly different way. Since the term 'family practices' was popularized in 1996, many researchers have used, developed and critiqued it. This demonstrates how influential the concept of 'family practices' has become in sociology, and in family studies in particular. One of the critiques of family practices was that it largely dealt with heterosexual married couples with children (Smart 2007). Yet, interestingly, family practices emerged as an important theme in my interviews, particularly with lesbians and gays. By contrast most of my heterosexual participants showed a pronounced reluctance to be involved in family. Rejecting the traditional daughter-in-law role for example, as I shall discuss below, was one of the reasons why participants hesitated to embrace family practices.

5-2-2. Struggling with the Position of Daughter-/Son-in-Law

Not only their own perceptions of cohabitation, but also their parents' views influenced my participants in configuring their cohabitation. There is another phrase for 'to marry' used more frequently in Korea which is *시집가다* or 'going to the husband's family' for women and *장가가다* or 'going to the wife's family' for men. Marriage in Korea still refers to the uniting of two families, rather than the joining of two individuals (a woman and a man). Yet, married women and men have different positions in their partner's family in terms of power relations. Traditionally, women as daughters-in-law are expected to be subservient to their husband's family (his parents in particular), whereas men as sons-in-law are meant to be shown respect by their wife's parents and family. Technically, the relationships my interviewees had as cohabitees were not formal conjugal ones. Nonetheless, some families treated their

child's cohabitation as a form of marriage, and conflicts could arise from this, particularly between partners. The related patterns were significantly gendered.

Being the Daughter-in-Law

Yuyu (HW, 32) had a very difficult time with her partner's mother who treated her as a daughter-in-law. Yuyu cohabited with her partner whom she first met at university in 2000. They were a couple for several years and broke up, and then became a couple again in 2008. Yuyu recalled that she had had good relationships with her boyfriend's family (mother, father and younger brother) when she met her partner about twelve years previously. Therefore, when she met her current partner again in 2008, his family welcomed Yuyu, but not the fact that they lived together. Yuyu's partner's mother kept pressuring her son and Yuyu to marry rather than cohabit and this was just the prelude to all the drama waiting for Yuyu:

> I think she [Yuyu's partner's mother] changed her strategy from telling me to get married to treating me as a daughter-in-law as if I was already married. For example, when I visited them, though she didn't call me 'daughter-in-law', she treated me like I'm her daughter-in-law, saying, 'Here she is. My lovely and pretty Yuyu. Now I can relax.' You know what I mean? After having lunch or dinner together at my partner's place, she said that 'I can relax now', which meant she expected me to wash the dishes and prepare the dessert. I was invited and went there as a guest! She even tried to teach me things like cooking stuff, treating me like a daughter-in-law.

The status of being a daughter-in-law and what it suggests by way of required behaviour are not considered desirable by many young Korean women, because becoming a daughter-in-law means having to serve the husband and husband's family, doing housework, taking care of the mother-in-law and father-in-law, and even looking after the husband's (patrilineal) ancestors by preparing food for all related ceremonies (Kendall 1996). The specific version of the daughter-in-law role is still strongly embedded in Korean society and this is one of the reasons why women decide to divorce (see Kim Yohan 2014) and why women decide not to marry (see Kim Minsang 2014).

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Yuyu disagreed with the conventional daughter-in-law role; however, she could not stop her partner's mother from expecting her to become a traditional daughter-in-law. What was worse, from Yuyu's viewpoint, was that her partner's mother's behaviour became more pronounced after her partner's younger brother brought his girlfriend home:

> It got worse and worse, especially after my partner's younger brother's girlfriend appeared. She was very different from me. She was so domestic. You know what I mean, don't you? Calling 'mother, mother', she peeled fruits after dinner and washed dishes. I just sat in the living room because we were in the middle of a conversation. But then, my partner's mother asked me to help her and I couldn't resist it. Everything was alright until my partner's younger brother's girlfriend was involved. But after she appeared, she visited my partner's parents' house so often and gave them presents every festive day. In that situation, I had to do something, I was forced to do something really because of the atmosphere. Since then, my partner's mother has started treating me as the first daughter-in-law and her as the second daughter-in-law.

Yuyu recounted that her partner's younger brother and his girlfriend were also cohabiting and her partner's mother did not like that either, saying 'why are my two sons only cohabiting, not marrying, although they have no deformities?' Yuyu thought that her partner's mother then changed her strategy to deal with her sons' girlfriends. Yuyu admitted that this new approach had in fact worked, as she felt compelled to undertake the traditional daughter-in-law role irrespective of her own wishes. She had kept trying to avoid such family practices primarily because she did not agree with the conventional role of the daughter-in-law. Furthermore, Yuyu did not consider herself as a daughter-in-law since she had not married her partner. In contrast, Yuyu's partner's mother saw her son's cohabitation with Yuyu as a form of marriage, or perhaps tried to interpret it as a marriage, treating Yuyu like her daughter-in-law. This tension between Yuyu and her partner's mother clearly shows a heterosexual female cohabitant attempting to reject traditional family norms that have subordinated women in Korea.

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Surprisingly, however, such resistance to being treated as the daughter-in-law was not only present among heterosexual females, but also among my lesbian participants. Namul (L, 33, w/Jinny) talked about her experience with Jinny's family as the lengthy of extract below shows. She said that her experience might have led to their break-up:

The only problem between me and Jinny was her family. She has eight siblings and her sixth, seventh and eighth sisters and brothers live nearby, all of them live within five minutes' walking distance from where we live and they know that we're in a relationship. So our [lesbian] relationship was kind of out. I would say our status is between cohabitation and marriage. I mean, we're cohabiting, but we're married from their perspective, because they're married heterosexuals. They just see us as a married couple through their heterosexual lens. Then, they drew me into their family without my consent. They even visited our place when we were not at home. One day, they even asked me to change the curtain that I got new because it didn't look nice to them. [sigh] I went through the kind of stresses that heterosexual daughters-in-law would experience. I couldn't get away from the stress for the first year, crying every day. I told Jinny every day that I was so stressed as they treated me as a daughter-in-law. I just couldn't understand it. I was so embarrassed when Jinny didn't care about people coming and going to our place. She told me that her house [when she lived alone] was a sort of open house for everyone, her family and friends. […] And I told you that Jinny had never had a proper couple relationship before me, didn't I? Jinny changed so much after she met me, and her sisters-in-law and sisters didn't like me in the beginning because Jinny talked about me all the time and left earlier than before when she was with her family. The more they felt disappointed about me, the more I was stressed. I was so frustrated that I told Jinny we should break up. We nearly broke up. But we agreed that we couldn't break up because of her family. We never fought about us, always about her family. In the end, I declared that I would never ever complain about her family. I would give up on it. Then

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Jinny also announced to her family that she needs to concentrate on Namul, so that she might not be able to come so often and don't be disappointed. She cared about me more, visiting or inviting her family much less than before. Since then, we have made much effort to have our own time. You know, we just started cohabiting while I was caring for her when she was in hospital. We had never dated properly. It was like her family came between us, right after the hospital. As soon as I cohabited with Jinny, honestly speaking, cohabitation with her family began. It took me a year. Anyway, after we overcame the one year arguing about her family, we started dating, traveling and having our own time.

Namul's memories poured from her mouth and it seemed she could not stop talking as if she had to tell her story to relieve herself. Namul's experience was something I had never expected (and neither had Namul) because I personally thought that no one would treat a lesbian partner as a daughter-in-law. It is very interesting that Namul's and Jinny's lesbian relationship was interpreted by Jinny's family like a heterosexual relationship, given that Namul was treated as a daughter-in-law by her partner's family. What is equally interesting here is the fact that Namul had shown her willingness in relation to other practices to enter into traditional (heterosexual) family activities, although she rejected the daughter-in-law position and its obligations (i.e. agreeing to whatever the husband or husband's family want). This conflict between a cohabitant and partner's parents in terms of defying traditional family practices was also present in my heterosexual male sample, but in a different way.

Being the Son-in-Law

In contrast to Yuyu who was not comfortable with her partner's mother treating her as a daughter-in-law, Ken (HM, 30) complained that his girlfriend's mother did not treat him as a son-in-law, although he planned to be her son-in-law sometime soon. As indicated in Chapter 3, Ken's cohabitation with his girlfriend began with both parents' consent as a temporary arrangement in preparation for marriage, and Ken and his girlfriend were just waiting for the 'right time' to have the wedding ceremony. Consequently, Ken thought that his cohabitation was not very different

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from marriage, and thus he believed that he had a right to be treated as a son-in-law by his girlfriend's family. However, Ken's girlfriend's mother did not seem to treat him as such from his perspective and he complained about it:

> To be honest, I wanted to get married, have a wedding ceremony with lots of celebration and love. And you know, when a son-in-law visits his wife's parents' house, his mother-in-law prepares a great meal such as brood hen [씨암탉]. He would get respect from his mother-in-law as well as feel warm. But this just disappears when you cohabit. She just calls me 'Ken' like a baby. I think, there is a necessary respect in a formalized relation between a son-in-law and his mother-in-law, but it doesn't exist in cohabitation.

The status of a son-in-law is completely different from that of a daughter-in-law in Korea. As Ken pointed out, when a son-in-law visits his wife's family, his mother in-law is expected to prepare a special meal. A well-known Korean saying clearly demonstrates how sons-in-law and daughters-in-law are treated differently: the 'son-in-law is a guest for one hundred years in his wife's family and the daughter-in-law becomes part of her husband's family forever'. This signifies that a son-in-law is an important and precious person in his wife's family because their daughter's life depends on him, whereas a daughter-in-law must leave her natal family and live with her husband and his family to serve them until she dies. This Confucian idea has been deeply embedded in Korean society and is still dominant (Chang Kyungsup 2010). Ken wanted to be treated as a son-in-law because it had clear advantages for him in terms of being treated deferentially, while Yuyu and Namul did not want to be treated as daughters-in-law since that position simply implies servitude.

As Yuyu, Namul and Ken have shown, the attitudes to the traditional daughter-in-law and son-in-law role were very gendered. This reflects the fact that traditional family norms are in many ways gendered. It also demonstrates that cohabiting couples selectively incorporate and refuse traditional family practices, understandably along the line of advantage.

5-2-3. The Division of Housework and Finance

The division of housework and finance is one of the key practical aspects in which family is done, with wives in Korea conventionally taking the responsibility for all the domestic work and husbands being in charge of managing the finances in the household. The division of running a household, such as who does the housework and who pays the bills in cohabitation, has been extensively examined in the west (see Macklin 1972; Stafford, Backman and Dibona 1977; Denmark, Shaw and Ciali 1985; Batalova and Cohen 2002; Ciabattari 2004; Nordblom 2004; Cunningham 2005; Domínguez-Folgueras 2013; Steuber and Paik 2014) and a little in Korea (Park Eunjoo 2002; Kim Jiyoung 2005), and in particular, allocating housework has been considered key in terms of doing gender in the family. Explanations of the division of household labour have been discussed in three ways when largely focused on the traditional family (heterosexual married couples, with children sometimes): time-availability (see Becker 1981), human capital resources (see Blood and Wolfe 1960) and gender ideology (see Brines 1994).

First, researchers of the time-availability theory argue that the person with more time at home tends do more housework (Davis and Greenstein 2004). However, this is not invariably the case and rather complex nowadays. For example, there were some cases in my sample when participants worked from home. They obviously had more time at home, working their own business and making money at the same time. This case may not necessarily fit the time-availability theory and will be discussed in the subsequent section. Human capital resources theory suggests that the person with more resources (i.e. more earning, higher educational background and better occupational status) tends to do less housework. These two theories are prominent when looking at the division of household labour in the traditional context, where women are usually the homemaker and men the primary breadwinner. Since women's participation in the labour market has increased rapidly, however, a new perspective based on 'doing gender' (see West and Zimmerman 1987) has emerged. West and Zimmerman's 'doing gender' theory argues that individuals construct gender through housework in everyday practices. Brines (1994) also maintains that people who have a strongly gendered view, for example, that women should do 'feminine' housework (i.e. cooking, cleaning and doing laundry) and men should do 'masculine' housework (i.e. mowing the lawn and dealing with the garbage), tend to

conform to gendered norms. This can explain the unequal double burden where women who are in full-time employment and earning as much as their husband still remain the primary home-carer whilst men are able to carry out their breadwinner role only. Married women may be expected to continue to conduct the traditional housewife role even when they earn more or have higher occupational prestige (Gupta 2006).

McWhirter and Mattison (1984) and Kurdek (2007) found that lesbian and gay couples are likely to divide the housework based on their interest and efficiency in certain tasks. As a result, the division of housework may be negotiated according to preferences. Although this finding has not been explicitly examined for heterosexual cohabiting couples, it may apply to them too, given the extensive evidence that different-sex cohabiting couples seek more egalitarian ways of allocating housework than married ones and also that long-lasting couples tend to agree who does what (see Davis, Greenstein and Marks 2007).

Most of my participants appeared to take the categories of time-availability, gender ideology and preference into account in how they divided their housework, but very few mentioned that their housework allocation depended on how much they contributed financially to the household (see Figure 8).
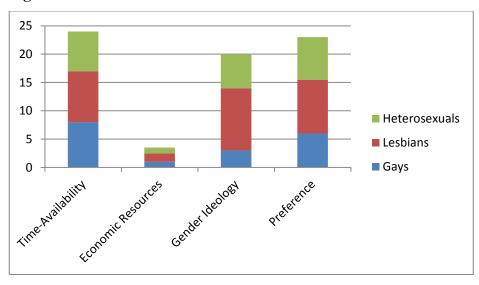
Figure 8. The Division of Housework

Source: Interview data (2012).

Before starting to analyse this graph, a brief explanation may be necessary. The numbers on the vertical axis indicate the number of participants who mentioned the four dimensions that affected their housework division (time-availability, economic resources, gender ideology and preferences). Specifically, when my interviewees explicitly brought up a dimension, I counted it as 1.0 and when it was implicitly referred to I counted it as 0.5. For instance, if a participant answered the question 'how was the domestic work divided?' with 'it's because I spend more time at home', this was counted as 1.0 under 'Time-Availability'. If a participant did not mention the money issue, but seemed to be affected by how much s/he contributed to the household in terms of housework, it was counted as 0.5. In addition, several dimensions were relevant for a given participant and each was counted.

Consequently the total number exceeds the total number of my interviewees. When taking into account all the dimensions mentioned by each individual participant, and totalling them by sexual and gender identity, the following figures emerged: the total count for heterosexuals was 21.5 (10.5 for females and 11 for males), 18.0 for gays and 31.0 for lesbians. When these numbers are divided by the number of participants based on sexual identity (twelve heterosexuals, nine gays and fourteen lesbians), they average 1.79 for heterosexuals, 2.0 gays and 2.21 for lesbians. This is important because it suggests that these lesbian couples considered slightly more than two dimensions of the four (time-availability, economic resources, gender ideology and preference), gays noted an average two and different-sex couples were concerned with less than two dimensions. This implies that lesbians' division of housework was based on the most complex considerations, followed by gay and heterosexual cohabiting couples. This may be because, as Kurdek (2007) suggests, lesbians are socialized as women who are 'supposed to do' domestic work and this impacted on their decision of how to allocate the housework within a couple. However, Kurdek's (2007) notion is contradicted when it comes to the results of my gay interviewees who were situated between lesbians and heterosexuals (see also Carrington 1999). Leslie (G, 37, w/Jinseok) said in his interview: 'gays are basically feminine, though there are some crazy machos, and tend to like expressing their femininity in many ways regardless of whether they are top or bottom'. In this perspective, gays were to some extent aligned with the feminine, and this might account for their more complex way of dividing the housework than heterosexuals. To summarise, when

couples occupy the same gender position, role divisions are allocated in different ways than in couples occupying different gender positions. I shall now turn to discuss how time-availability, interest and preference, gender ideology and resources impacted on how my participants divided the housework, according to the preference order in which they were articulated and then discuss doing family further at the end.

The Importance of Time-Availability

As Figure 8 shows, time-availability appeared to be the most influential factor that affected how my interviewees allocated their housework. This seemed to be equally important for heterosexuals, gays and lesbians. Time-availability was clearly related to how many hours individuals stayed at home and worked outside the home, but it also applied to those who worked at home as they spent more time there than their partner. This gave them more time to do housework although they worked as much as their partner or even longer at home, though they saved on travel time. For example, Garam (G, 34, w/Dio), whose partner worked freelance from home, described how busy his partner was: 'He works a lot. You know, the IT field is one of the 3Ds [dangerous, dirty and difficult]. He often works even after I come back home'. At the same time, however, both Garam and Dio said that Dio took care of most of the housework as he was the one who stayed at home more than his partner. This is not consistent with existing studies that found that the longer a person engaged in paid work, the less they were involved in doing domestic chores (see Bittman et al. 2003). Interestingly, Wonseok (HM, 36, w/Alice), Ed (L, 33, w/Basa) and Dio (G, 29, w/Garam) all worked freelance, did more housework than their counterpart and actually earnt more than their partners. This again contradicts previous findings, and suggests that in these instances the person who stays at home the most does the most housework, irrespective of how much they earn and their gender.

Personal Preferences

Following time-availability, what people were interested in and what they were good at appeared to be the second most influential factor in organising the division of housework in a cohabiting couple. For example:

He is good at cooking and likes doing it while I'm not good at it. So, he usually cooks and cleans and I do the laundry and the dishes. And we take cleaning the cats' toilet in turn. (Ahreum: HW, 30, w/Dongchi)

It was automatically divided over time. We never split things up. […] He [Kenneth's partner] loves cooking so much that he mostly cooks. Also he's far better at doing it than me. Washing dishes, cleaning and laundry are done by me. I don't have complaints, though I'm not sure about my partner. What matters, I guess, is the gap in hygiene standard. For instance, some people feel ok changing their underwear once every three days and some need to change it every day. But it can't be judged right or wrong, can it? […] I think finding a middle way is important between a couple. (Kenneth: G, 40)

Ahreum and Kenneth said that their household labour was divided based on their interest and skills, and when both liked a certain task or neither did, it was done in turn.[61] It was thus partly a matter of preference and efficiency (McWhirter and Mattison 1984). Many interviewees had no explicit agreement regarding who did what.

We never discussed, you do this and I do that. From my experience of the previous cohabitation, this was useless. (laughs) The best lesson from my past cohabitation was that a person who hates specific things should make sure they get done. I mean, for example, if I can't bear a not-perfectly cleaned bathroom, then I have to clean the bathroom. If my partner cleans the bathroom, she may not meet my standard. […] Anyway, where one is more picky about certain domestic work, the person should do it. I think that's the most effective way. (Hosu: L, 29, w/Penni)

Drawing upon her past experience, Hosu suggested that standards of hygiene should determine the division of certain aspects of domestic labour, noting that pre-

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[61] See Ahreum's talk about cleaning the cats' toilet.

allocation was useless. Overall, my findings here add to certain existing studies that preference for certain housework in terms of standards can be influential in the division of housework as well as one's interest and efficient skills.

The Impact of Gender Ideology

Gender ideology was the third factor that affected the division of domestic labour within a cohabiting couple. The gender issue in terms of housework allocation has been variously discussed. Berk (1985) and Brines (1994) argue that doing housework is not just work for women, but a way of constructing gender, enacting femininity, and men representing their masculinity by not doing domestic chores. Cunningham (2005) notes that gender socialization influences the way cohabiting couples share their domestic labour to some extent, highlighting that an egalitarian attitude early in the life course has an impact upon the housework division. Similarly, Davis, Greenstein and Marks (2007) in their comparative research in 28 nations, maintain that gender ideology is influential in the way in which cohabiting couples decide who is the primary housekeeper and breadwinner, even when both partners are earners. Goldberg (2013) contends that same-sex couples do and undo gender through practicing or rejecting certain household labour divisions.

In terms of gender, Cogito (HM, 40, w/Sinbi) and Ken (HM, 30) were polar opposites. Cogito was a man who strongly asserted that men and women should be equal. Ken, however, was an ordinary Korean man following traditional gendered norms. For instance, Ken expected the daughter-in-law role from his female cohabitant in the future and he also gave all his earnings to his girlfriend as if they were already a married heterosexual couple. Cogito carried out domestic labour actively and in fact, complained about his female partner who seemed only to assist him. In contrast, Ken said somewhat arrogantly that he washed the dishes when his girlfriend cooked, although his married male friends hardly did any housework because their wives were already 'a fish in a fish tank'. He explained why he performed the least household labour: 'We've been cohabiting with a plan to get married when we're ready, with both our parents' agreement. But who knows? We never know until we get a stamp on our marriage registration certificate. I need her to marry me and so does she.' This seems quite consistent with Ciabattari's (2004) study which argues that cohabiting couples with a significant investment in their

relationship and the intention to marry tend to have more active attitudes to domestic work than those who do not. One might also argue that those men who have highly gendered views tend not to perform domestic work as a way of expressing their masculinity (see West and Zimmerman 1987).

The Impact of Economic Resources

Economic resources were hardly mentioned by the cohabiting couples in the discussion of how they decided to split their domestic work. Yet, there were several implicit references to some interviewees' partners contributing a large portion of money to their household. Bud (G, 42) said: 'He [his partner] obviously earns much more money than I do. But I'm pretty sure what I've been contributing to our home is not less than him, given that I've taken care of running the household and everything happening at home'. This indicates that Bud actually cared about the fact that he financially supported the household much less than his partner. However, when I asked Bud how he divided the housework with his partner, he never talked about money, but simply said that it was naturally and mostly done by him, as he was freelance working at home whereas his partner's job was very stressful and always busy. Perhaps the reason why Bud did not speak about the money matters in the first place is that talking directly about money is culturally taboo in Korea. Several other participants also expressed feeling uncomfortable when faced with having to discuss money matters with their partner. For instance, Pony (HM, 33, w/Shim) said:

> I guess the division of housework is quite fair, about fifty-fifty. […] At first, we agreed to pay the bills and etc. in a ratio based on how much we earnt. I invested my money into getting the house and paying the deposit, and additionally I've paid the bills more than Shim. Well, I don't usually talk about the money issue because she said that it is mean to talk about money.

Sometimes the money problem caused arguments between a couple. Agasa (L, 36, w/Lime) apparently seemed not happy with her partner when they talked about money matters and this developed into a quarrel.

You know, I've done almost all of the housework. Of course, I appreciate that Lime [her partner] has taken most of the financial responsibility. I'm not doing all the housework because of it, though. And I also financially contribute to our house as much as I can. And did I tell you about my father? He happened to become a monk several years ago and has been living in the country side, farming with my mom. When my parents harvested rice or vegetables, they've always sent them to us. You know, it's priceless, isn't it? But Lime doesn't seem to appreciate it enough. Anyway, after we had a big fight due to the money problem, we decided to have a joint account so that we can put the same money into the account every month for the living expenses. I think things have been going ok so far since we started it last month.

Agasa explicitly mentioned that she did not take responsibility for all the housework due to the fact that her partner paid more than her for the bills and living expenditure. Given what she said in her interview, however, how much each person earnt and contributed to their household was not completely unrelated to the discussion of housework allocation. It is also interesting to note that they created a joint account to establish a fairer system of financial contribution to their household.

As Pahl (1989) argues, money easily leads to inequality within a couple in terms of power relations. She developed a typology of money management in terms of how money is managed by whom in a married couple. According to Pahl (1989), the homemaker management (wife management) means that the homemaker is in charge of running the household in terms of finance as well as domestic work. Breadwinner management (husband management) refers to the breadwinner as responsible for managing the household financially. The allowance system indicates that a breadwinner gives her/his partner (who is probably a primary homemaker) a set amount of money regularly and the partner controls the money for paying for specific items of household expenditure, while the rest of the money remains in the control of the breadwinner. Shared management refers to a couple having a joint account into which both incomes are paid and from which both draw. Thus both have access to the income entering the household and expenditure responsibilities are more or less shared. The essential characteristics of the independent management system are that

both partners have an income and that neither has access to all the household funds. Each partner is responsible for specific items of expenditure, and though these responsibilities may change over time, the principle of separate control over income and separate responsibility for expenditure is maintained. The first three management types (homemaker management, breadwinner management and allowance) are based on the notion of the couple as a single economic unit; the other two household money managing types are privatized systems with two separate and autonomous economic units. I used her typology (see Table 8) with some changes since hers was exclusively about married heterosexual couples, and did not include non-marital cohabiting different-sex or same-sex couples. Thus, I interpreted the first sub-category 'Wife Management' as a main homemaker and the second one 'Husband Management' as a main breadwinner.

Table 7. Money Management Typology within a Couple

Management Types	Heterosexuals	Gays	Lesbians	Total
Wife Management	1	1	0	2
Husband Management	0	0	0	0
Allowance	0	0	0	0
Shared Management	3	2	5	10
Independent Management	3	3	2	8

Source: Pahl (1989: 67-74), Interview data (2012).

Table 7 shows that 50% of cohabiting couples had a joint account to manage the household expenditure, 40% kept their own account and paid equal shares from it and only 10% used the wife management system (main homemaker management). The lesbian couples seemed to prefer shared management, whereas gays were the opposite. An equal number of different-sex cohabiting couples had shared and independent management respectively. Also interestingly, no lesbians had wife management (main homemaker management) while one heterosexual and gay couple used this system. Among my participants, no one used the husband management.

Some of my participants said that their household was run like a wife/husband management structure, as a way of underlining their strong bond with their partner. Others who had either shared management or independent management emphasized that their relationships was more or less equal in terms of the housework division as

well as financial contribution. In particular, an equal share in the allocation of domestic chores and finance was on the whole consistent with previous findings which demonstrate that cohabiting couples tend to seek equality in terms of power relations (see Kaufman 2000).

Nevertheless, as Pahl (1989) claims, an individual's salary may not be the same as that of her/his partner, and the earning gap can potentially cause inequality in a (heterosexual) couple; one (usually a male) earns more and thus may have more say than his partner. There were obviously earning gaps within the couples in my interview data, but no significant unequal influence on the division of domestic work was narrated. Instead, the feature of doing family was prominent among my interviewees, particularly the lesbians and gays.

Doing Family: Doing, Undoing and Redoing Gender towards Doing Family

In general, housework is stereotyped as an unimportant and troublesome task that should be conducted by females. Moreover, housework has also been seen as one way of doing gender (see West and Zimmerman 1987). This may not be difficult to understand in a context where such studies exclusively focus on heterosexual (married) couples. However, when it comes to non-normative heterosexual couples (i.e. cohabiting heterosexual couples) or same-sex couples in Korea, different ways of conceptualising 'doing family' emerged.

Household labour is one of the key practices that constitute the family through symbolic meaning (DeVault 1991). This is the same to a large extent in cohabiting couple relations (South and Spitze 1994; Greenstein 1996). Greenstein (1996) suggests that for women and men, doing housework might be perceived as enacting appropriate family roles. More specifically, Davis, Greenstein and Marks (2007: 1246) state that 'studying cohabiting couples allows examination of family processes and dynamics'. As for same-sex cohabiting couples, moreover, Carrington (1999) notes that the way in which lesbian and gay couples do domestic labour may be seen as a way of legitimating their own family/ies. Drawing on the theories and arguments above in relation to the possibility of connection between family practices in the division of housework and non-normative Korean cohabiting couples, I shall argue

that same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples exibit 'doing family' through complex ways of doing gender.

A significant number of my participants appeared to be 'doing family' through the ways in which they divided up their housework, and the doing family emerged from complex ways derived from doing gender. There has been a modest body of research on the mechanism of doing, undoing and redoing gender for heterosexual divorcees (Walzer 2008), for transgenders (Connell 2010), for female police offers (Morash and Haarr 2012) and for the heterosexual family (Lui 2013). By doing, undoing and redoing gender, I intend to use each term as conforming to traditional gender norms for 'doing gender', deconstructing and resisting them for 'undoing gender' and reproducing them (in a conventional way or sometimes in a unique way) for 'redoing gender'. Some researchers such as West and Zimmerman disagree with expanding the idea from doing gender to undoing and redoing gender, asserting that 'sex category and gender are usually congruent, and thus unremarkable' (2009: 118; see also Messerchmidt 2008), and therefore it does not make sense as 'women can be seen as unfeminine but that does not make them *unfemale*' (West and Zimmerman 1987: 134, emphasis in original, see also West and Zimmerman 2009). However, I do not agree with West and Zimmerman, but rather support that gender (norms) constructed in a society are distinct from the sex category grounded in a biological idea (see Morash and Haarr 2012), although I acknowledge that the relation between gender and sex (category) is complexly intertwined. With this as a starting point for analysis, I will investigate how my participants turned out to be doing family through the doing, undoing and redoing of gender.

The doing, undoing and redoing of gender were particularly evident among those interviewees who perceived their cohabitation as a premarital relation (heterosexual couples who can legally marry) or as a marriage relation (homosexual couples who cannot legally marry in Korea, but think of cohabitation as marriage). Two heterosexual interviewees, Sarang (HM, 29, w/Sunyoung) and Ken (HM, 30), who exhibited doing family explicitly and implicitly, viewed their cohabitation as a pre-marital relation. In contrast, most others either were not convinced of their marriage in the future or had already decided by mutual agreement not to marry. In their cohabitation, doing, undoing and redoing of gender resulted in doing family. For

example, when Sarang first started cohabiting with Sunyoung, he took responsibility for paying the rent where they lived. As noted in Chapter 3, their cohabitation began unexpectedly in Sunyoung's place from the day they first met. When they lived together at Sunyoung's place, not Sarang's, he was willing to pay for it. This reflects the traditional custom that men (husbands) set up a house and women (wives) add household furniture and items into the house with dowry in cash. Sarang accounted for why he paid the rent: 'I said to her that I'll pay the rent because I lived at her house'. He could have been in charge of the living expenses, instead of solely paying the rent. However, Sarang wanted to be responsible for the rent, contributing equally to the living expenses with his female partner. He further commented that 'none of us paid things exclusively. We've been financially equal from the beginning'. Given that Sarang thought it was fair for him to pay the rent, equally paying the other living expenses, might imply that he took it for granted that men traditionally provide a home for their wife (or wife-to-be), and this can be interpreted as his doing of gender.

However, at the same time, Sarang did not exactly follow the gender norms one might expect in a quasi-marriage relation. He, particularly in the beginning of their relationship, did more housework than his female partner, often preparing a lunch box for her. Also, he did not involve his female partner in his family, for example, taking her to his parents' house on festive days. This could be read as undoing gender to some extent, since Sarang clearly appreciated that his relationship was cohabitation, not marriage, and thus seemed to try not to conform to traditional gender norms. Instead, he sought for equality between himself and his female partner, which is very unusual in Korea, particularly for men. Whilst the cohabitation relationship itself affected Sarang to undo gender to some degree, he seemed to endeavour to redo gender at some point, especially when talking about marriage:

> Sarang: I think the most important thing in cohabitation for me is taking responsibility.
> Researcher: What do you mean by taking responsibility?
> Sarang: Marriage, it is. Marriage the most. Yes, it is. […] I'll get married when I'm ready, when I can carry out a satisfying marriage life.
> Researcher: What do you mean by satisfying marriage life?

Sarang: Hmm… financial aspect and my personal aspect. Also, the capacity of becoming parents and looking after my parents is important.

Sarang exhibited a typical Korean men's attitude towards marriage, mentioning responsibility, financial power and taking care of one's parents, for example. As a first son in his family, Sarang seemed to feel obligated to look after his parents. Although he did not explicitly speak about living with his parents after marrying, it is still noteworthy that he particularly considered looking after his parents in the discussion of marriage. At the time of the interview, both his parents were alive and in good psychological and physical health. Thus there was no particular reason why he should have been particularly concerned about his parents when talking about his own marriage. This might signify that Sarang was redoing gender through his belief that a first son should take care of his parents even after marriage.

Another heterosexual male participant Ken (HM, 30) also exhibited the doing, undoing and redoing of gender. The way in which Ken and his partner managed their finances in the household might indicate that he was doing gender through managing their household. As briefly discussed in the previous section 'The Impact of Economic Resources', Ken maintained the 'wife management' system that his wife-to-be dealt with all their earnings, which is typical for traditional heterosexual families in Korea and also at times in the west (Pahl, 1989). Ken insisted that 'I think, it's a good way of saving money for us [Ken and his partner] so that we can prepare for our marriage [more specifically, the wedding ceremony]. You know, our parents' generation did the same as us, didn't they?' However, he later expressed worries about their finance system: 'I'm not quite sure about whether I stick to it or manage our bank accounts separately because, you know, no one knows what's going to happen [meaning a break-up].' It is intriguing that he continued the conventional way of running the household finance even though he was not entirely satisfied with the wife management system (in Pahl's term). This demonstrates that Ken wanted to do gender (or do family in a certain way) through this financial management system, which was culturally considered a typical financial division in Korean families. Moreover, similarly to Sarang, Ken also seemed to undo gender, being actively involved in sharing housework with his female partner, with the idea

that cohabitation does not guarantee marriage, and thus an equal share of household chores (which is unconventional) is necessary in order to achieve marriage.

When Ken talked about marriage details, however, he seemed to redo gender, complaining about his female partner's traditional attitude:

> We both know about each other's family financial situation. But my girlfriend asked me once to set up a house to live together when we get married as she'll do the rest, such as bringing household furniture and kitchen items. I was quite surprised because I didn't expect her to say this, given that she was well aware of my parents' financial situation. Well, my parents could borrow money from a bank and arrange a home in an apartment. Then, I shall see how much she would prepare for the household furniture and everything.

In an interaction with his girlfriend who wanted to follow the traditional way in terms of who arranges what in preparation for marriage, Ken redid gender. Although Ken seemed to seek an equal (cohabiting) relationship with his partner, with doing and undoing gender simultaneously, he changed his position towards re-adapting the traditional gendered way of who prepares what for marriage, which seemed to follow conventional family norms.

In the case of both Sarang and Ken, it appears that heterosexual cohabiting couples tended to start doing gender in the way they were socialised in terms of gendered norms. Yet, the relational frame of cohabitation caused the participants to undo gender because the relationship they had was in fact out of the norm, and that triggered deconstructing their doing of gender. Then, when they faced a moment that reminded them of traditional gendered ways of thinking, for instance, what to do in connection with marriage, they redid gender. Ultimately, the triangle mechanism of doing, undoing and redoing gender affects the shape of doing family in the cohabiting couple relationship. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler (2004: 199) notes that 'heterosexuality doesn't belong exclusively to heterosexuals'. In a wider context, this might embrace the notion that heteronormativity, which could also mean heteronormative gendered norms, can be embedded among lesbians and gays as well

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as heterosexuals. With this as a starting point, I shall now examine the ways in which gay and lesbian cohabiting couples did family through the doing, undoing and redoing of gender.

Like the heterosexual participants, gay couples also appeared to do, undo and redo gender, but in a different way. The wife management system that Ken (HM, 30) had was also present in my interview with Bud (G, 42). He described how he did the typical wifely role, taking all the responsibility for the money management as well as all the housework while his partner seemed to take the typical husband role as the main breadwinner. When Bud spoke about how they ran their household financially, he explained it in detail, stressing how committed they were to each other:

> Basically, I do the financial management. He earns more than me,
> though. And I give him 300,000 Won [165 pounds approximately] for
> monthly pocket money. But it's the maximum and I usually give him
> 100,000 Won [55 pounds approximately]. We joined our bank accounts.
> […] We don't have 'your money' or 'my money' regardless of who earns
> more. Well, I earn less than him, but I think I save our money as much as
> the earning gap between us. […] We're not stressed about who earns
> more and less because we're managing it as one. […] It's not a joint
> account. We just put our entire wage into the one person's account. There
> isn't huge money in there anyway. After allocating some money exactly
> half and half into our insurance and savings account, the rest of the
> money goes into the account for living expenses. Only a small amount of
> money is left there. […] I know, some people would just say that the way
> we manage money is bizarre. But it's about how you're committed to
> each other, isn't it?

Bud spent quite a lot of time talking about how he and his partner dealt with the money in their household, and he seemed to be proud of their way of organizing their finances because he believed it was proof of how committed they were. This is consistent with what Pahl (1989) discovered in her research that those who maintained their household finance as a single unit, the wife-management system in particular, expressed more commitment/committed than others who used a different

system of household money management. In addition to the management of their finances, Bud was also convinced that his doing all the housework ensured their commitment which ordinary heterosexual married couples seem to have. Bud thus actively engaged in doing gender. However, given that he was actually a man who is not generally expected to take charge of doing housework and running the household financially, this might also be interpreted as undoing gender.

Although Bud complained a few times that he had to serve his partner at home constantly, he at the end of the interview asserted that it was how his parents' generation lived with a strong tie:

> You know, our parents lived just like us. Mothers, in particular, sacrificed everything for their family, running the household without any help from their husband. […] The more you sacrifice, the stronger the bond you have with your partner. It's all about family, I believe.

By comparing his cohabitation to his mother's and father's relationship (or a wife and husband), Bud seemed to re-define his couple relationship with a strong belief that the 'old-fashioned way' of running a household with the clear gender role division model, housekeeper and breadwinner, was the 'right' way for a family. This could be read as redoing gender which eventually completes the doing family, with the doing and undoing gender. As the ethnographic sociologist Carrington (1999) argues, Bud may have deliberately carried out family practices (embodied by doing, undoing and redoing gender) via the conventional way of running the household in order to prove that he and his partner were the same kind of family as other people (meaning heterosexual married couples).

Garam (G, 34, w/Dio) showed a similar mechanism of doing, undoing and redoing gender with the desire to be family in terms of managing the household, but in a slightly different way. Garam clearly said that he and his partner began a 'sort of marriage life' after he proposed to Dio to 'join their households'. He strictly separated joining households from mere cohabitation:

We believe that we're living a kind of married life after I proposed to him to join our households at a restaurant. People [older brothers] around me knew what it meant. […] We make a plan for our future together. The house is ours. We deal with everything together by mutual consent. […] Well, Dio is mainly responsible for the wifely role, doing most of the domestic work. But I also do something when I get a chance. […] We even often call each other 'hubby' at home, although we usually don't do it outside when we're with other people. I keep censoring myself because I'm not sure about whether using the word 'hubby' is appropriate. I feel Dio is like my husband, but not in the traditional heterosexual way. There isn't a proper vocabulary for us, is there? […] Anyway, we see our relationship as married life, the family, you know. I mean, one of the families.

What is interesting in this extract is that Garam initially seemed to do gender, following the typical heteronormative norms; one person is doing a wifely role while the other does the husband one. Like Bud and his partner, however, Garam and his partner (Dio) are a same-sex male couple that in fact deconstruct the gendered system, which suggests undoing gender. Garam describes how he realised that he felt Dio was like a husband to him, albeit not in the traditional heterosexual way, and how they called each other 'hubby'. Garam thus redefined his 'hubby' relation with his partner, where there is no an appropriate word to match each gay role, and this may be indicative of redoing gender. Taken all together, he seemed to seek a form of egalitarian family, simultaneously doing, undoing as well as redoing gender.

This triple-layered doing of gender was also evident in the interviews with my lesbian participants. Among my lesbian interviewees, Anna and Tina, and Lime and Agasa demonstrated the most 'typical' husband-wife role division more commonly found in heterosexual couples. Previously a postgraduate student, Anna (L, 34, w/Tina) had just started a new business as a restaurant owner with her partner a week before our interview. Anna said that she used to financially contribute to the household less than her partner, as she was only a student while her partner was employed. Yet, she also did less domestic work, although she probably had more time at home than her partner, commenting, 'my partner did most though I really

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wanted to share it half and half'. On the other hand, Tina (L, 31, w/Anna) said something slightly different from Anna:

> We've paid [for the bills and living expenses] half and half. And the housework… It's right to do the domestic labour half and half. (laugh) Well, I do most of the household work. It's because of what I am. I just feel comfortable with doing it on my own. […] It was ok in the beginning. But I've started feeling annoyed by the unfair housework division. It's still comfortable for me to do it on my own, though.

Whereas Anna said that she paid less than Tina for their household, Tina did not comment on this, stating that the financial contribution was fair. As for the domestic chores, both stated the same, that Tina did most of it while Anna did little. This might resonate with Greenstein's (2000) research which argues that husbands limit doing domestic chores so as to neutralize gender deviance when they are financially dependent on their wife. Gupta (2006) also found that wives tend to remain the primary housekeeper whether or not they contribute more to the household financially than their husband. In this respect, the way Anna and Tina dealt with their housework and financial contribution to their household seems a very obvious case of doing gender. As Bud and Garam discussed above, moreover, it was through undoing gender that this same-sex female couple projected themselves as in a typical heterosexual relation, for example the wife doing most of housework even if the husband did not carry out the breadwinner role.

The division of lesbian identities in 'femme' and 'butch' or of gay identities into 'bottom' and 'top' are prevalent in Korea, as Ryu Hyejin (2010) points out. As a Korean lesbian, in the past I have been asked by lesbian strangers if I was 'femme' or 'butch'. Yet, my answer was not very important to them because I was already recognised as 'butch' due to my short hair and low voice. Trends have changed in Korea, and asking whether one is 'femme' or 'butch' may not be as common as it was in the past. Nevertheless, it still seems to exist and lesbians tend to automatically brand other people as well as themselves as either 'femme' or 'butch' (Ryu Hyejin 2010). This distinction seemed to play a significant role in the division of domestic labour in my study. Five out of seven lesbian couples explicitly or implicitly

identified themselves as either femme or butch, and all the femmes were mainly responsible for the housework, whilst the butches were doing certain (traditionally masculine) tasks.

Anna had a 'typical' butch look, with short hair, boyish gestures and a middle-low voice. Her partner Tina was clearly femme-looking with a long hair, feminine outfits and a high voice. The division into femme and butch is still popular in Korea (Ryu Hyejin 2010), whereas it seems somewhat outdated in the west (see Plummer 1992). From my personal experience in Korea, however, being asked whether I am a femme or butch by strangers has dramatically decreased although it does not mean that there is no femme/butch division. The clear gendered division, the femme doing most housework or being responsible for relatively feminine tasks and the butch doing very little domestic labour or comparably masculine chores, was present among most of my lesbian couples with a little gap in the extent to which each partner had a gender equality mind-set towards her partner. I would argue that Anna and Tina were redoing gender in doing femme and butch respectively.

However, there was a crucial difference among the lesbian interviewees from the gays in terms of femme and butch position. It is widely assumed that femmes for lesbians and bottoms for gays are relatively feminine, doing feminine work such as housework, whereas butches for lesbians and tops for gays are the opposite. However, Gabb (2005) and many others (see also Goldberg 2013) argue that the division of femme/butch and bottom/top should not be understood as a binary relation of femininity and masculinity because the inside reality is much more complex than that. Yet, no explicit top and bottom discourse was found in the gay interviews in discussing the division of housework and the way of allocating housework was mostly influenced by time-availability, not by the top/bottom position. In fact, the housework division was largely in reverse from the perspective of the masculine top and the feminine bottom. In contrast, most of my lesbian participants said they followed the feminine femme and masculine butch style in the division of household labour, with the femme conducting the relatively feminine housework and the butch doing masculine tasks such as driving, taking out the garbage and changing light bulbs.

This result is thoroughly inconsistent with previous findings (see Levitt and Hiestand 2004; Lev 2008; Rothblum 2010; Ryu Hyejin 2010). For example, in her research across the United States, Rothblum (2010) found that few women divided their household labour according to their butch/femme identity. My lesbian participants did not seem intentionally to assign most of housework to the femme, but did so 'naturally' with excuses like 'it's more comfortable for me to do it on my own rather than seeing what she's doing' or 'I can do things much faster than her', as Tina commented.

Lime and Agasa, whose femme or butch character was clearly identified in their interviews, also had an unbalanced division of finance and housework. According to Lime (L, 39, w/Agasa), she took most responsibility for paying the bills and the living expenses because her partner earned much less than her. But Lime further talked about how she felt about it and complained to her partner eventually:

> I think I'm a too small-minded person. I was really unhappy with me paying almost our entire expenses while she paid only a little. We tend to eat out once a week on average. If we say it costs 50,000 Won [25 pounds approximately] per eat-out, it'd be 200,000 Won [100 pounds approximately] a month in total. Money leaks so easily from my bank account. So, I kept complaining about it to Agasa and she was stressed about it. Finally, she suggested to me that we have a joint account into which we put the same amount of money every month and manage the living expenses within it. I was too mean, wasn't I? You know, married men leave their whole wage to their wife.

Lime seemed to reproach herself for feeling upset about paying more than her partner. This is interesting because not only did she complain about the unequal contribution, which could be seen as striving for equality, but she also compared herself to heterosexual husbands. Lime seemed to be doing gender, placing herself into the heterosexual married husband's position, which can also be seen as undoing gender.

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Moreover, Agasa (L, 36, w/Lime) seemed to have accepted the unfair housework division. Agasa said that she did most of the domestic labour because she had more time at home and could do it faster than her partner. But when her partner sat on the sofa watching television while Agasa was busy with housework, she said that she made her partner do the dishes. This typical scene of heterosexual married couples in terms of conducting the household tasks could, on the one hand, be interpreted as one partner doing more housework due to time-availability. However, on the other hand, there could be another reason. I would argue that the femme and butch dynamic affected their unbalanced housework division. They did not explicitly say that Agasa did all the housework because she was femme and Lime was less involved in domestic labour than her partner because she was butch. Yet, Agasa once mentioned that she was quite popular with many butches when she lived in Busan, and Lime also talked about other people in the lesbian community she joined, addressing one of them as femme and the other as butch, rather than using their actual names. Given that they were well aware of the femme/butch division, Lime and Agasa seemed to inhabit butch/femme roles. All the other lesbian couples were placed as either femme or butch based on what they explicitly or implicitly commented on during interviews. As discussed previously in the case of the lesbian couple Anna and Tina, the femme and butch identification of Lime and Agasa seemed to be located at a core point that revolved around the orbit of doing, undoing and redoing gender.

This phenomenon is intriguing because it is a significantly different from my gay participants. As Jinseok (G, 36, w/Leslie) pointed out, Korean gays are generally keen on identifying other gays in terms of bottom and top. However, my gay participants' housework division was not very coherent with their bottom-ness and top-ness. I would not be able to conclude that Korean lesbians are more likely to accept the traditional heterosexual way of household labour division, butches following what heterosexual men (husbands) usually do and femmes imitating what heterosexual women (wives) do, because first, there is no literature to support my findings; second, I had only fourteen lesbian interviewees to suggest this femme/butch dyadic correlation with the allocation of domestic work; and third, there were also many subversive ways of doing a femme and butch within my sample of lesbian couples. In addition, Gabb (2005) points out, that displacing the femme and butch relation by the female and male coupling may be an over-

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simplification because the femme and butch dynamics function within couples in rather complex ways since it is not simply a matter of femininity and masculinity or a role-playing at being similar to heterosexual couples. Ryu Hyejin (2010) argues that the femme-butch (or bottom-top) dichotomy has not been considered as a desirable subject in Korean academe as it can easily be seen as a replication of the heterosexual dyadic relation. Drawing on one of Lev's (2008: 137) interviewees who stated it 'looks different from inside' when explaining her couple relation in terms of femme and butch, Lev argues that femme-butch relations are performed and structured in rather complex ways.

However, in my study, same-sex couples demonstrated a much stronger desire for legitimating their couple relationship as an 'ordinary' family than different-sex cohabitants (Heaphy, Smart and Einarsdottir 2013). Moreover, the ways in which lesbian and gay cohabiting couples organised and conducted their household labour and finance were not very uniform, with simultaneous and continuous emulation and rejection of traditional heterosexual family norms. Through doing, undoing and redoing gender, same-sex couples appeared to seek doing family because they thought that family is not just for heterosexuals, but something they could also do and were entitled to.

5-3. Having a Pet – Completing the Family

Pet ownership is widespread in many cultures. As Haraway (2003) argues, the relationship between people and dogs (and pets in general) has become increasingly intimate (see also Power 2008). Pet ownership emerged as an important topic among my interviewees. Therefore this section focuses on the ways in which pets functioned for these cohabiting couples, particularly in the discussion of their set-up as family-like. When I went to Korea for my fieldwork, I planned to investigate the experiences of cohabiting couples in Korea and my semi-structured interview questions did not include any reference to 'pets', maybe because I personally have never had a pet. Surprisingly, however, a considerable number of my participants talked about the significance of pets in their cohabitation and it was almost always related to the discussion of the heterosexual family and children. Children are often seen as key to heterosexuals' family formation (Morgan 2011). My interviewees

suggested that potentially like a child, having a family and a stable home were articulated through their pet. Jinny (L, 46, w/Namul) said:

> Our life has centred on our puppy since we adopted it from a friend of mine. Like [heterosexual] people's child-centred living after marriage. […] Taengza [the puppy's name] is like our child and after we started raising it, Namul became stable emotionally. Namul often complained that she always felt excluded and isolated before we got Tangza. But after that, she seemed to think that we had our own family, you know, just the three of us. […] With Taengza, I also began to have a feeling of family and a stable home that I'd never felt in the previous dating relationships.

Jinny and her partner said that they treated their puppy Taengza like a child. Jinny talked a lot about how she spent her time at home and outside with her dog, combing it, taking it for walks, feeding it and going on trips with it, for instance. What is interesting here is that Jinny compared her pet with a child, mentioning 'people's child-centred living after marriage'. In this respect, Jinny's activities with her dog can be understood as a way of doing family, although the dog-related practices (combing, taking a walk and feeding, etc.) are typical for dealing with a pet in general and not family-specific as such. Nonetheless, that connection was explicitly made. Jinny, moreover, talked of other couples that had the same attitudes:

> Around us, there are so many couples who have been cohabiting for a long time. They are just like [heterosexual] married couples. […] Some of them have dogs or cats like they are their children. […] The family we have is no less than theirs [heterosexual married couples' family].

Comparing lesbian and heterosexual families, Jinny suggested that there were no differences between lesbian and heterosexual couples. This relation between having a pet, treating it as a child and feeling like a family was also present in gay interviews. For example, Leslie (G, 37, w/Jinseok) said:

We initially agreed to raise a cat when we were planning to live together. We thought, it would create some kind of bond, you know, a strong bond between me and Jinseok. By raising a cat, we can have more responsibility in our relationship, because it's not only about us. From the moment we started living with a cat, the cat was also involved in our life. It's just like raising a kid. Later we got two more kittens, we grew to treat them like real babies.

In contrast to Jinny who got a puppy after she started cohabiting, Leslie and his partner Jinseok made a blueprint for their cohabiting life that included a cat before living together, because Leslie expected it to have a bonding effect on their relationship. He also pointed out that 'baby' cats were more like 'real' [human] babies. Franklin (1999) notes that adopting a pet tends to be perceived to be similar to adopting a human child, and in the process baby animals particularly are preferred so that the pets can be socialized by the owners from a very early age. To the human owners, this may also give them a special experience by feeding and caring for the pets, having them vaccinated and training them how/where to pee and poo in a similar way as parents do with their kids. As seen from Jinny's and Leslie's accounts, the way in which they treated their pets and the way in which the pets functioned in the couples' relationships seem very similar to heterosexuals' family practices. Children themselves and childcare play a very important role in family practices (Morgan 2011) and in displaying families (Finch 2007). The lesbian and gay cohabiting couples in my study clearly considered their pets as children.

It was also quite obvious that cuddling, feeding and combing pets took time. Pets also require a lot of money. Jinseok (G, 36, w/Leslie) talked about how much his cats had cost him financially:

Although we've relatively spent less money on cat food than others as we can get them with a discount from Leslie's acquaintance, it still costs a lot. Also, we need to take them to a veterinary hospital regularly and it costs really a lot. But you know, it's what people do with their children.

Jinseok repeatedly compared his cats to three-year-old human babies and spent much time talking about his cats during the interview. For example, he told me about how his cats went through hard times after their house was burgled, how they had ruined his living room curtains so that he decided not to hang curtains after that. He also poked fun at Leslie, saying how the cats were Leslie's second priority, his iPad his first and Jinseok his third.

As in Jinseok's case, I saw how important pets were in a participant's life every time I interviewed pet owners. Six out of twenty cohabiting couples spoke about their pets during the interviews and there might have been more pet owners if I had asked specifically about that. However, not all pet owners identified their pets as children. For instance, Garam (G, 34, w/Dio) and Jeongyol (G, 35) did not view their pet as a child. It might be because they had not had their pet for very long (both said that they had adopted their pet recently) or because they did not want to view their pet that way. Nonetheless, it was quite clear that some of the pet owners saw their pets as children and the ways they treated their pets could be interpreted as a form of doing family.

The notion of pets functioning as a means of doing family did not only emerge among lesbian and gay couples, but also among heterosexual ones, but in a slightly different way. Dongchi (HM, 30, w/Ahreum) acknowledged the importance of their pets in their relationship and also compared their pets to children, saying: 'We're raising cats. They play a very important role in our relationship. They function like children.' Yet, Dongchi did not connect the idea of having pets with family, but only with the notion of marriage: 'This relationship we're having now may not be different from marriage from the perspective of Korean people in general.' His partner Ahreum (HW, 30, w/Dongchi) also did not specifically portrait their cat as her child. This difference from the lesbian and gay couples who had pets suggests that these heterosexual participants did not view their cohabitation as a form of family building, but as similar to marriage. This was also evident with another heterosexual interviewee who had two cats. Sunyoung (HW, 29, w/Sarang), seemed to be greatly attached to her cats, even choosing the animals over her potential human baby.

I'm raising animals. You know, animals are often considered as troublesome or you may even face having to get rid of them when you get married and give birth to a baby. I have to admit that I don't want to have a baby because of this potential situation. One of them [Sunyoung's cats] is seven years old and the other one is eight years old. They've gone through every hard time with me since I moved to Seoul. So, I want to look after them till the end [until they die]. I'll never give up on them because of a [human] baby.

Sunyoung said that she had already discussed the baby issue with her partner and they had agreed to look after the cats until they die. She kept calling her cats 'my babies' during the interview and seemed to consider her cats as her 'real' children, rather than just anthropomorphizing them. However, she did not show any desire to claim that her cohabitation was like a family by raising pets like children, which is consistent with the other heterosexual couple (Ahreum and Dongchi) but not with the lesbian and gay couples (Jinny and Namul and Leslie and Jinseok). This is a striking finding as it may suggest that homosexual cohabiting couples have a greater desire to approximate the conventional idea of family than heterosexual ones, actively doing family and displaying this, whereas different-sex couples did not quite link their relationship to family, but only identified theirs with marriage.

To put it differently, same-sex couples have a tendency to seek 'ordinariness', as Heaphy, Smart and Einarsdottir (2013) have discovered. Their study also notes that the reasons why same-sex couples in their sample (who all formalised their relationship as civil partnerships) compared their relationship to heterosexual married couples may be associated with a social environment where gay couple relationships are accepted and respected. At the same time, the 'sanctity' of heterosexual marriage has been weakened in the UK. Many couples of all sexual orientations in the UK choose to cohabit rather than to get married. In contrast, in Korea civil partnerships are not an option and through cohabitation, living like a family has become a possibility for same-sex couples. Furthermore, heterosexual couples in Korea are beginning to reject conventional ideas of marriage and family but from a position where both are, at least theoretically, available to them.

5-4. Friends as Relationship Supporters

The affirmation of a relationship depends partly on its recognition by others. When talking about their friends, I found a significant discrepancy between heterosexual and homosexual interviewees. Initially, I had not planned specific questions for my interviewees about their friends. Yet lesbians and gays emphasized that their friends meant a lot to them and how supportive they were, whereas few heterosexual participants mentioned the importance of their friends. Lesbian and gay interviewees, moreover, identified their community friends[62] as part of their family and some of them valued their friends more than their family of origin.

This perception of lesbians' and gays' friends as their family has been frequently observed in existing studies of lesbian and gay friendships (see Weston 1991; Nardi and Sherrod 1994; Nardi 1999; Na Youngjeong et al. 2014). Although there are some critiques that the phenomenon of lesbian and gay friends substituting for their family is due to the assumption that everyone needs a family based on blood kinship which homosexuals cannot readily have, Weston (1991: 107) argues from a historical transformations perspective:

> The historical construction of an ideological contrast between chosen (gay) families and blood (straight) family has not left biologistic and procreative conceptions of kinship untouched. But if coming out has supplied gay families with a specific content (the organizing principle of choice) by exposing the selective aspects of blood relations, it remains to be shown how choice became allied with kinship and gay identity to produce a discourse on families we choose.

In my Korean sample, lesbians and gays repeatedly modelled their relationship on the idea of 'family'. With this in focus, this section deals with how my lesbian and gay participants did family with their friends because, as Nardi (1999: 192) notes, 'friendship networks […] become the primary site where the daily lives of gay men and lesbians are carried out and shaped'.

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[62] Lesbian and gay participants specified 'community' friends rather than just friends because they did not consider every friend of theirs as significant, but only the friends they had met in lesbian/gay communities, all of whom were lesbians or gays.

The vast majority of my gay interviewees indicated that they relied on their friends very much, describing them as their 'real family' (Dio), 'families' (Garam) or just 'family' (Leslie). Moreover, the family-like relation of the same-sex cohabiting couples and their friends played a significant role in sustaining couples' cohabitation, in particular when they fought or had trouble. Jaekyoung (G, 41, w/Ahn) stressed the importance of the role of his friends in his cohabitation, particularly his older friends who had a lot of experience and could view things from a different angle:

> We've tended to get help from people around us. We really did rather than face each other when things were quite serious. […] When things were under control, you could deal with it. But if things go beyond yourself, people around you are important. They are really important. People who have various experiences or who can think differently from me... In my case, I'm a bit older and there are even older brothers in the community [Chingusai]. I often talk to them when I need advice. Or I'm going to meet older brothers in G-Voice tomorrow whom I can talk to, too. Thanks to their help, we've done well, I think.

This has to be understood within the Korean context, where people older than oneself are meant to be treated with respect and used for advice and guidance. Jaekyoung specifically referenced his older friends who potentially had more experience than him. Jaekyoung also commented that problems in his couple relationship with Ahn were frequently resolved through his friends' support. His partner, Ahn (G, 45, w/Jaekyoung), talked in very direct ways about this:

> I've been in this community [Chingusai] for a long time and have got lots of friends, close friends whom I've known over ten years, like my younger and older brothers. So, let's say I and Jaekyoung have fought over something, and then he would run to my friends and rat on me, so that everyone gets to know about our trouble. Thus, our fight can't become bigger as people around us come to us to help us solve our problem, saying 'this is your [Ahn] fault and that is your [Jaekyoung] fault'. […] To develop and sustain the couple relationship, counselling or

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self-reflection is important. But help from people around a couple is also very important. […] They support us not to have friction between me and Jaekyoung.

Ahn's description sounded very much like the ways Korean people discuss family in terms of going to a family member to tell on their partner. This scene is a typical family practice in Korea – it is what heterosexual married couples often do after a fight. When a heterosexual married couple faces a problem, they (usually the wife) are likely to visit[63] their parents and/or parents-in-law to receive counselling and support. As Ahn said, he considered his community friends his family (younger and older brothers), and thus when Jaekyoung went to Ahn's friends whom they regarded as brothers in order to explain what had happened and to ask for advice, this could be interpreted as performing a typical family practice in the Korean context.

How gay cohabiting couples became involved in doing family with their gay friends was also articulated in Garam and Dio's story:

> In our case particularly, you know gays living together, it may be an
> inevitable consequence that we live in a wider community, with friends
> as well as a partner. We're not going to end up living with our family of
> origin anyway. It's better living together so we can give and take support
> from each other. These people I met at Chingusai know about me and
> understand what I need more because they fundamentally comprehend
> the special nature that we have as gays. Hence, our relationship with gay
> friends is basically very supportive, looking after each other. As we're
> becoming old, living with non-mainstreamers together may be a very
> good strategy and an inevitable consequence. […] A sort of family. The
> diverse family we call it, you know within the notion of families. As a
> form of family, I think we'll live altogether with my partner, friends from
> Chingusai and colleagues in the name of a community that we'll build
> together and it won't be a temporary relation. (Garam, G, 34, w/Dio)

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[63] Instead of visiting in person, people may simply phone nowadays.

Garam distinguished his gay friends who could essentially sympathise with him in terms of being gay and cohabiting with an intimate male partner, from his family of origin that might not understand his gayness, suggesting that forming a community with his gay friends as well as his partner could be an alternative way of doing family. Moreover, he stressed his stable relation with his friends (as well as his partner), emphasizing that it would never be temporary. It seemed clear to me as a researcher that he wanted to have a form of family with his partner and community friends, which might be a necessary as well as practical step for gays in Korea. It is interesting to note that Garam showed his willingness to form a family of his own, separate from his natal family, throughout the interview, but at the same time, he was also quite reluctant to use the term 'family'. In the excerpt above, he named the group he would live with a 'community' rather than a 'family', although he kept mentioning family and families. This implies that he was perhaps endeavouring to have a new form of family, which might be differentiated from the traditional and 'polluted'[64] family in his terms.

Dio (G, 29, w/Garam) had a very similar view of his gay friends as his partner, and added one more important point about his older gay friends who became his role models:

> Having seen those who have already come out and live with their partner happily, I started thinking that I could live like them with my partner. You know, they're like my role models. […] After getting to know the Chingusai older brothers, I think I've become aware of the direction in my life.

The expression 'role-model' is key here. Ahn, Jaekyounh and Garam as well as Dio referred to how important their older gay friends ('brothers' in their terms) were, particularly due to their experience, advice and warm support. The significance of gay friends as role models to inspire and support their friends has been repeatedly studied in the west (Cass 1979; Nardi 1999; Riggle et al. 2008). The importance of a role model for gays was also discussed in my interview with Kenneth. Kenneth (G,

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[64] Garam said once at the beginning of his interview that the idea of family was polluted.

40) pointed out the lack of role models for gay couples: 'We, as gays, don't have enough role models. In my case, for example, we're the oldest cohabiting couple in my social [gay] network. We don't have people to ask what to do when we get into trouble. That's a shame, isn't it?' Although I personally had no idea how many gay friends Kenneth had at the time of interviewing, I would guess that he was not an active member in gay communities given that he said, 'I have only a few gay friends.' Compared to Ahn (G, 45, w/Jaekyoung), the oldest gay participant in my sample, Kenneth was relatively younger and it turned out that there were gay cohabiting couples over forty-five years of age in the gay community (Chingusai), according to what Ahn said in his interview. In this sense, it seems to be the case that the limited extent to which he was involved in the gay community also limited Kenneth's opportunities to get to know older gay cohabiting couples who could be role models for him.

The importance of community friends was also expressed in my interviews with lesbians. Unlike almost all of my gay participants who were actively taking part in gay communities, however, only about half of my lesbian interviewees were active members in some lesbian community and the rest had closer friendship networks with feminist (and lesbian friendly) groups. Lesbians who were active members in lesbian communities had very similar opinions about their friends as the gay interviewees, such as recognising their friends as their family, gathering on almost every festive day together, while those who were not, did not explicitly mention that their friends were akin to family. Lesbians who did not have close connections with lesbian communities were more consistent with my heterosexual participants who viewed their friends as important, disclosing their secrets such as their cohabitation to them, but not seeing them as their family. Regardless of whether one sees one's friends as family, however, lesbian cohabiting couples also had worries about themselves and their future life. Generally, these worries were similar to those of other participants, about if and when either of a couple is ill and dies. These concerns were often discussed with friends to exchange information and to receive advice. Almost all lesbian and gay participants spoke about their uncertain future, for example what if they faced a time when they needed to sign as a guarantor in a hospital, when either of the couple died and they needed to deal with the funeral and the matter of inheritance afterwards. There are currently no laws in association with

the rights of guarantor and inheritance for couples who are not tied as a legal family, although a few academic groups, such as the Research Group for Family Formation Rights and many other human rights activists have been campaigning towards enacting certain necessary laws. When imagining these scenarios, many participants appeared to be keen on giving and receiving support for such unexpected and sudden accidents within a friendship network. For example, Jinseok (G, 36, w/Leslie) mentioned that he and his partner put emergency contacts on their refrigerator 'just in case', after witnessing several negative situations. They knew about a gay man who received no communication after his partner's car accident, as it was directed to his natal family, nor was he allowed to attend the funeral because the parents in the family did not want their son's gay partner to be present.

Overall, there was only a small gap between different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples concerning the degree to which they relied on her or his friends, considering them as family, the former depending on their friends less than the latter. However, it was clear that both heterosexual and homosexual couples were more or less dependent on their friends due to their hidden or vulnerable situation. Additionally, it is noteworthy that lesbian and gay cohabiting couples in particular considered their community friends as their extended family members to a certain degree, and they supported each other by engaging in particular family practices such as celebrating festive days together.

Conclusion

My research has shown that cohabitation is determined in part by the options available to a given couple. On the whole, heterosexual cohabiting couples saw themselves as engaging in marriage-like practices in their cohabitation, mostly trying to reject traditional family norms, whereas lesbians and gays tended to seek family norms by doing family embodied by doing, undoing and redoing gender.

In their interview data Heaphy, Smart and Einarsdottir (2013) found that most same-sex couples in civil partnerships described their formalised relationship as the same as heterosexual marriages, connecting them to the idea of the 'ordinary' or 'ordinariness'. Although the situation they worked in was different from that of my participants as civil partnership is not legalised in Korea, the ways in which non-

heterosexual couples in the UK showed their desire for the ordinary life of heterosexual married couples by doing family practices in some way seems similar to the practices of same-sex couples in Korea. But the differences there were of course a function of the real-life options (marriage, civil partnership, neither) available to them, and it also reflects cultural specificity and a certain conservatism.

Chapter 6. Concluding Remarks

Introduction

In this thesis I investigated how Korean couples report their experience of cohabitation with their partner. I explored the lives of cohabiting couples from when they made the decision to live together to their on-going cohabiting processes. For this I interviewed both partners in heterosexual, lesbian or gay couples. I concentrated on three main areas of the cohabiting couples' experiences that emerged in the interviewees: 1) how and where my participants first met their partner, how the processes of entering cohabitation went and the ways in which they viewed that process and their cohabitation; 2) the extent to which the couples disclosed the nature of their cohabitation to others, given that in Korea non-marital or pre-marital cohabitation is stigmatised; and 3) how they lived together. I conducted 35 semi-structured interviews between April and September 2012. In this Conclusion, I shall begin with some personal remarks to look back over the whole of my PhD process and, more importantly, to re-visit how and why I decided to examine this topic in personal as well as academic terms. This is common practice in Women's Studies (see Miller 1991; Ryan-Flood and Gill 2013). Secondly, I shall revisit the key debates in research on Korean cohabiting couples that underpinned my own research project. Then I will move on to discuss what I found that was new and that enabled me to contribute original knowledge in the fields of Family and Relationship Studies. Lastly, I shall outline some suggestions for future research on cohabiting couples, followed by brief concluding remarks.

6-1. Reflecting on Self

The time has finally come for me to conclude the three-year-long journey that never seemed to end and I am more than happy to write this Conclusion because this thesis is not 'only' academic research, but a story that contains me having had extreme worries, painful ups-and-downs and great joy in conducting my project. In retrospect, the initial research target for this study was only Korean lesbian couples, but I changed my research focus to different-sex *and* same-sex couples. Initially, I was very worried that I would be identified as a lesbian simply because of the fact that my PhD thesis deals with lesbians. Therefore, I expanded the participant brief to

heterosexual and gay cohabiting couples. And I have to confess that initially I was not very interested in the lives of cohabiting heterosexual and gay couples, but only in lesbians, because I thought I could learn how to live well with my own lesbian partner from researching other Korean lesbians' experiences.

After I had decided to broaden my research target and read the relevant Korean literature, however, I became aware that the lives of Korean lesbian couples cannot be read in isolation, but should be read in comparison with male same-sex and heterosexual couples to gain a better understanding of their cohabitation, because lesbians' lives are closely intertwined with others' lives and very complex, based on cultural norms regarding marriage, family and gendered traditions in the Korean context. I am happy that I decided to consider gay and heterosexual couples as well as lesbians because my thesis has become more solid as a consequence of examining these various gender and sexual identity positions. I am also happy about my thesis because I had the opportunity to face and reflect upon myself during the PhD process, and thereby the worries I had in the beginning about others finding out that I am lesbian went away by revealing that I am lesbian. Initially, I intended to conceal that I am lesbian and lied to two of my heterosexual male participants during the interviews by pretending that I was heterosexual and would marry soon after my PhD. I struggled with writing my Methodology chapter because initially I thought about discussing how difficult the fieldwork was as a heterosexual researcher in terms of recruiting and interviewing homosexual participants (Blackwood 1995; La Pastina 2006). But I could not keep on writing lies and asked my supervisor what to do about this matter. We then decided not to specifically mention my sexual identity as I remained concerned about my future employability in Korea. Yet, it again did not work. I realised that my position as a Korean lesbian played a significant role in this study and should not be avoided, not only for the thesis, but also for myself. Hence, I came to make the big decision to identify myself as lesbian in the thesis and that helped me to keep reflecting on myself, engaging with the research more effectively. I did not only communicate with the participants in the interviews, but also kept talking to them and myself in analysing the interview data and writing each chapter. This thesis therefore helped to develop me as researcher and as an individual. In feminist terms, the personal became the academic. This constitutes one of the important dimensions of my work.

6-2. Key Debates

The phenomenon of cohabitation, particularly among people who regard it as a committed and long-term living arrangement, has grown rapidly in Korea, with little research that deals with this. Most studies on heterosexual cohabitation focus on women only, without paying attention to cohabiting men's voices, in part because they see cohabitation as more problematic for women than for men, and that women are judged more severely than men for cohabiting, and also partly because they accept traditional familial and gender norms that situate women in more vulnerable positions than men. At the same time, no research has inquired into same-sex couples' cohabiting experiences, apart from Kim Sunnam (2013) who examined the intimate lives of lesbian and gay couples, briefly touching on some of their cohabiting experiences. There were thus three main gaps in research in this area: 1) almost all research had centred on 'pre-marital' cohabitation, framing cohabitation in a relationship that will end up in marriage without other options. This suggests that in the long run marriage is the only viable relationship for an intimate couple. 2) Almost all qualitative studies had focused on cohabiting women only,[65] assuming that men are of no significant interest in cohabitation. 3) Due to the first focus, almost all research has paid attention to heterosexual cohabitation only, and thus same-sex couples have been largely excluded in this work. My research fills these gaps by exploring the reported lives of Korean different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples. Consequently, women and men, heterosexuals, lesbians and gays are involved in this study – this is an original approach in this field.

Most of the sparse early Korean literature on cohabitation dealt with common-law marriage and related legal matters as cohabitation only perceived as a 'de facto marriage' living arrangement within a context of strong traditional familialism (see Kim Hyesook 1989). Moving into the 1990s and onwards, with the influx of modernisation, individualisation and feminist perspectives from the west, the cohabitation phenomenon became more prominent, particularly around universities and colleges. Most studies about university students' cohabitation or their attitude to

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[65] There are a few quantitative studies that also consider cohabiting men. Yet, they seem to fail to inquire into men's perceptions of their cohabiting experiences on a deeper level because only quantitative methods (surveying) are used (see Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010).

cohabitation confined cohabitation to a pre-marital relation based on a familialism perspective and pointed to issues such as sexual morality and problems such as unexpected pregnancy, abortion and becoming a single mom (see Kim Mihyun 2008; Kim Haeran and Kim Gyeha 2010; Yang Soojin 2012). These studies tended to interpret university students' cohabitation negatively, without any clear cause and effect connection between cohabitation and other social developments such as delaying marriage and the growing rate of divorce, claiming that cohabitation attacks familialism. These anti-cohabitation studies from a family-normative perspective superficially touched on why young students chose to cohabit before marriage and problematized students' favourable views of cohabitation.

In contrast to these, there is some feminist research discussing the unequal treatment of cohabiting women and men in society and connecting this gendered discrimination with the patriarchal family structure and marriage customs (see Park Eunjoo 2002; Kim Jiyoung 2005; Lee Yeonjoo 2008; Cho Ohsook 2012). Park Eunjoo's (2002) and Kim Jiyoung's (2005) work, in particular, are very important because first, both only researched Korean heterosexual cohabiting couples, using qualitative data and a feminist methodology; second, they focused on female cohabiters[66] to inquire into why and how they are more vulnerable and stigmatised in general than men; third, they examined cohabiters' private life which is not discussed in other literature, for example female cohabiters' position in relation to their male partner's family and the division of housework and financial contribution. Their findings in terms of women's more vulnerable situation and relatively equal division of housework and financial contribution to the household were generally similar to findings in western research (see Kaufman 2000). What I would like to investigate further at this point is the men's perspective. Both Park Eunjoo's (2002) and Kim Jiyoung's (2005) theses predominantly targeted female participants, and thus men's voices were missing in their research. Heterosexual cohabitation obviously involves a woman and a man in an intimate relationship and therefore cohabiting men as well as women should be researched. In this sense, my study involving both women and men equally is new and original.

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[66] Kim Jiyoung (2005) included two male interviewees, who were partners of the main female interviewees.

Lesbian and gay cohabiting couples in Korea remain largely unexplored. Kim Sunnam's (2013) study may be the closest to this area. She mainly explored how same-sex couples do intimacy and she briefly touched on some of her participants' cohabiting experiences. Since lesbian and gay couples' cohabitation was not her main concern, it was not fully examined. However, she makes a significant point when she argues that intimacy in same-sex couples does not operate separately from heterosexual norms. Rather, same-sex couples constantly negotiate around and reconstruct heterosexual marriage and family norms. She further argues that lesbian and gay couples in the Korean context in particular, have been excluded as a minor group and their internal diversity and differences have not been highlighted. To put it differently, one's gender and sexuality cannot be formed independently, but is constructed socially, influenced by the dominant norms such as heteronormativity and traditional familialism in the Korean case. Therefore, the process which structures intimacy in same-sex couples needs to be investigated complexly within its heteronormative social context and relations. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, moreover, the rapidly growing phenomenon of heterosexual cohabitation in Korea is not irrelevant to this new and untraditional type of household unit. In this sense, it may not be exaggerated to say that researching both same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples is the only option for a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which couples, whether heterosexual or homosexual, live their unconventional relationship in a heteronormative and marriage-based familialism society such as South Korea.

6-3. Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis is a ground-breaking study researching hidden and marginalised people who are cohabiting in Korea. As indicated in the Introduction (Chapter 1), there are only about ten academic studies (MA and PhD dissertations, journal articles) focusing on the everyday lives of Korean cohabiting couples and those studies examined mostly what was already found in earlier western research. However, my research explores further aspects of the reported experiences of Korean same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples, on a different level and from different angles. Therefore, this thesis provides new insights into how cohabiting couples struggle with traditional, familial and heteronormative norms in a conservative country such as South Korea.

First of all, in the Introduction I located the social context in which modernity and individualism are differently undergone in Korea from the west and reviewed the existing literature on different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples, focusing on Korea and some western countries where cohabitation is perceived as an everyday practice. In the Methodology chapter (Chapter 2), I discussed the methods, research questions and the process of interviewing in my fieldwork, as well as issues that arose. What I would like to emphasize specifically about the Methodology chapter is my concern with the researcher's positionality between the 'insider with an outsider-mask' and the 'outsider with an insider-mask'. I found myself as an insider with an outsider-mask and sometimes as an outsider with an insider-mask in my fieldwork. By this I mean that I pretended to be an outsider, although I was actually an insider and vice versa. Although my identity comprises many facets, the preeminent issue for me in this research was my sexual identity and I therefore talk of being an insider or an outsider particularly in relation to that. To those whom I interviewed I was, for example, an insider in terms of being Korean, irrespective of my and their sexual identities. But the latter was the salient issue here. This hiding myself by wearing a kind of in/outsider mask was because I did not want to reveal my lesbian identity. I decided not to come out as lesbian during my fieldwork and thus I did not voluntarily reveal myself until asked when I interviewed the gay participants.[67] Most of them said in the end that they thought that I was a lesbian as soon as they saw me because of my appearance, but one of the gay interviewees (Bud) was surprised by the fact that I did not disclose that I was lesbian at the beginning of the interview. I did not intend to lie about my sexual identity, but I realised that I was worried about revealing my lesbian identity to a stranger, although he was one of my participants and gay. I thought I unconsciously did wear, perhaps wanted to wear, an outsider-mask though I was an insider in terms of sexual identity. By contrast, I also experienced wearing an insider-mask by pretending to be heterosexual when interviewing heterosexual male participants. By chance, all of the heterosexual female participants were aware that I was lesbian, but two male heterosexuals (Sarang and Ken) did not know about me and I consciously concealed this because I

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[67] No heterosexual male interviewees asked me whether I was lesbian or not because it is not imaginable. At the same time, all lesbians already knew my sexual identity because all of them were recruited by me or someone who knew my sexual orientation.

was worried that they might refuse to be interviewed when they became aware of my lesbian identity. This suggests that the researcher's positionality in fieldwork goes beyond the binary of insider and outsider when located in a complex situation. My notion of the mask here is a new and original conceptualization in the field of interviewing and methodology.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the couples' early relationship phases dealing with where they met, how they became intimate and in what circumstances they discussed living together as well as the reasons for their cohabitation. This chapter was designed to revisit 'the reasons why people cohabit', which has been steadily studied as one of the key themes in research on cohabiting couples in western countries but much less so in Korea. However, most of the studies that focused on the reasons for living together were keen to investigate linear reasons, trying to categorise types of cohabitation in relation to marriage for instance, as its prelude, a trial or an alternative to marriage or to a single or simply lifestyle (see Peterman, Ridley and Anderson 1974; Watson 1983; DeMaris and Leslie 1984; Gwartney-Gibbs 1986; Huang et al., 2011). I however also looked at how the couples said they actually met, how they began considering living together and how they viewed the whole process of entering cohabitation. I would argue that these phases prior to actual cohabitation are very important because the decision to cohabit is likely to be affected by and related to that whole process. Hence, Chapter 3 examined not only the processes through which the participants started cohabiting, but also their initial relationship. This comprehensive approach to analysing motives for couples to cohabit is new, relative to the existing literature.

One of the key original findings here was the context in which the interviewees met their potential partner. Almost all the lesbians and gays met their partner in an online community or a public gathering organised by online communities, whereas no heterosexuals met their partner online. This was mainly because, as most same-sex couples pointed out, lesbians and gays cannot be sure about whether someone they meet in public is gay or not and asking them may be too risky. Due to the 'thin dating markets' in the public arena (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012: 533), it was a relatively easy option for them to meet their potential partner in certain online communities recognised as lesbian or gay or gay-friendly groups at least. What was striking at this

point was that selecting which online community to join was done as carefully as partner-selection among the lesbian and gay participants. At the same time, they did not seem intent on meeting a potential partner to cohabit with, but what they believed was a 'good' person in a 'good' group. The meaning of a 'good' group varied among the participants, from 'not flirting', 'intelligent' and 'interested in art and classics' to being 'political', 'feminist' and in 'activist organisations'. There are a number of lesbian and gay social groups in Korea which are searchable online. After my participants joined certain online groups, they tended to observe the members and the community for a while. When they felt safe and comfortable, they started taking actively part in the groups. This prudent community-selection, and subsequent partner-selection may well have affected the decision-making process of cohabitation, because the potential partner was already filtered during this selection process online, to prove that they were 'good enough' to live with.

In contrast, no different-sex couples met their partner online. They mostly met each other at university when they were students, at work or through blind dates organised by trusted friends or work colleagues. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is partly because meeting a potential partner, for heterosexuals in particular, is not understood as a safe choice, opposite to the cases of lesbians and gays in Korea (see Kang Jaewon 2012). Consequently, meeting a potential romantic partner online for non-homosexuals does not guarantee a 'good' person. Rather, it could be far more risky than meeting someone in public. Instead, meeting their potential partner through an introduction by trusted friends (or colleagues) appeared to be a safer way for heterosexuals. Although no heterosexuals met their partner online, the use of other social sources suggests that they also filtered where to meet a potential partner by avoiding online services, just as lesbians and gays carefully selected certain online communities to meet their potential partner.

In discussing the time people took from starting to date to actually living together, I utilized and extended Sassler's (2004) typology of cohabiters which had three categories: accelerated cohabiters, tentative cohabiters and purposive delayers. I inserted two more subcategories 'instantaneous cohabiters' and 'early cohabiters' under 'accelerated cohabiters', changed the term from 'tentative' to 'considered' cohabiters and inserted one more subcategory 'late cohabiters' under 'purposive

delayers' because distinctive differences were found in each timeframe among my participants. The main points I made in this were that, firstly, lesbians appeared to be 'cautious daters' compared to gays and heterosexuals, given that there were no lesbians who began cohabiting instantaneously while one gay and three heterosexuals did so. Secondly, however, lesbians also turned out to be quite purposive when deciding to cohabit if they thought that the timing was right because all lesbians entered cohabitation within a year, whereas some gays and heterosexuals took over a year and some even took nearly six years to make that decision. Thirdly, considering that no gays were 'accelerated' or 'considered' cohabiters, this might suggest that gays tend either to move in together very quickly or delay for a significant period of time. Heterosexuals seem to be quite similar to gays in this as there was only one heterosexual couple who were 'accelerated cohabiters' and none who were 'considered cohabiters'. Again, further research with a larger sample would be useful here to see whether or not these findings hold.

What I also think is an important finding in Chapter 3 is that the underlying motivations for choosing cohabitation were more complex than the existing literature on reasons for cohabitation. My participants portrayed the process of entering cohabitation as 'natural', rather than specifying primary reasons for cohabitation. Although money, convenience and a desire to be together were indicated by my interviewees, partly consistent with the existing findings, they were only secondary. What cohabiting couples in my data considered importantly was commitment. The theme of commitment was illustrated in various ways from being stable, settled and sincere to being in a flexible relationship. The idea of having a 'pure relationship' (Giddens 1992) was relevant for some of my interviewees.

In Chapter 4, I investigated the degree to which cohabiting couples disclosed their cohabitation to others, from private circles such as family members and friends to public ones such as work colleagues and neighbours. The results revealed interesting differences by gender and sexual identity. My main original findings in this chapter are: 1) men (whether heterosexual or gay) tended to reveal their cohabitation to others more than women (whether heterosexual or lesbian), and also more heterosexuals than homosexuals did so; 2) the reasons why cohabiting couples did/did not disclose their cohabitation to others were gendered; 3) despite the varying

degrees of disclosing their cohabitation to family and friends, cohabitants tried not to remain isolated by establishing cohabitation-friendly networks (i.e. finding new communities, groups or organisations). Although a few relevant studies have dealt with the degree of disclosure by cohabiters, they have mostly focused on disclosing to parents rather than looking at the wider social network (such as friends, work colleagues and neighbours) and no research has attempted to compare the cases of different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples. In this context, my findings are original.

Regardless of their sexual identity, women revealed the fact they were cohabiting to others much less frequently than men, whether this be to parents, siblings, friends or work colleagues. As one might expect, moreover, heterosexuals showed much higher disclosure rates than homosexuals. However, when both one's gender and sexual identity are taken into consideration, the results were somewhat different from when only one of these variables was considered. On the whole, the degree of disclosure was highest among heterosexual men followed, in descending order of rate of disclosure, by gays, heterosexual women and lesbians, except where parents were concerned. This finding is very interesting and important because first, it shows a clear, gendered gap between women and men in terms of disclosure, and between lesbians and gays. Female cohabiters, regardless of their sexual identity, were least likely to disclose to their family. Thus strongly gendered differences between heterosexual women and men, lesbians and gays in cohabitation disclosure emerged – a fact that has not been considered previously. Second, the reasons why cohabiters said they did/could not disclose their cohabitation to their parents were also distinctly gendered. Most heterosexual women were concerned about their parents being disappointed by the fact that their daughter was living with a man outside of marriage, because this would imply that they had lost their virginity, a source of stigma. In addition, most lesbians were worried that their parents might be disappointed and more likely shocked that their daughter was a lesbian.

On the other hand, men's reasons for not telling their parents about their cohabitation were quite different from women's. Irrespective of their sexual identity, a considerable number of men were concerned about filial duty to their parents and that they would not present them with a daughter-in-law who would serve them and

their ancestors. If they were the first son in their family in particular, they were more pressured than second or third sons due to the fact that they were the *Jangnam*. This has not been previously discussed, and thus is new.

The last point I would like to emphasize is that almost all of the heterosexual cohabiting couples told at least one of their friends or close work colleagues about their cohabitation in order to get recognition or to ask for advice or simply because some of them, mostly heterosexual males in particular, did not think it should be a secret. Further, all lesbian and gay participants disclosed their cohabitation to their community friends, although most did not tell their heterosexual friends and work colleagues. All of this constitutes original research findings. One point I found significant here was that most cohabiting couples tended to rearrange their close friendship groups, from those whom they had known for a long time to those who would be cohabitation-friendly or gay-friendly. This rearrangement of one's friends is important because, it shows that cohabiting couples tried to cope with their potential social isolation by telling trusted others and gaining recognition and support from them. This result contradicts the existing literature (see Park Eunjoo 2002; Kim Jiyoung 2005). Both Park Eunjoo (2002) and Kim Jiyoung (2005) found that some of their cohabiting heterosexual female participants had a tendency to feel guilty and isolated when they did not disclose their cohabitation to their significant others. My research cannot indicate whether the degree to which cohabiting couples felt pressured about disclosing their cohabitation to others has changed because existing studies do not indicate how many people revealed or concealed their cohabitation. What I can show is that most participants in my research also felt guilty and isolated, but they did not remain there. They were aware of feeling stressed about their situation and endeavoured to resolve this by engaging in some disclosure. For example, some of my heterosexual female participants who did not disclose their cohabitation to their parents went in for more disclosure to their trusted friends and siblings than heterosexual men, gays and lesbians. When they recognised that they did not have friends who were cohabitation-friendly, my participants visited feminist organisations or activist groups, took part there and made friends. It might not have been their intention to go there and make friends to disclose their cohabitation. Yet, this is how it worked out for some of my participants and they received support in that way.

My findings suggest that one's cohabitation impacts on one's social network as well as where one lives. Some of my participants (Yuyu, Leslie, Jeongyol, Jaekyoung and Hosu) said that they quit their initial job and moved to somewhere feminist or gay-friendly in order to feel free in terms of sharing their private lives such as cohabiting with others. For instance, Jeongyol (G, 35) talked about how pressured he was when required by his work colleagues to give a housewarming party. In Korea, it is common that people hold a housewarming party when they move to a new place or get married. Jeongyol was asked quite a few times about this. Although he kept delaying the party with the excuse that his house was not ready and he could not yet receive visitors, he admitted that he was stressed about it until he quit his job. Moreover, most of my participants (whether heterosexual or homosexual) said that they often felt excluded and stressed when their colleagues talked about their marriage or asked them when they would get married. They needed to make up a story if they did not want to come out or disclose their cohabitation. To escape this situation, some of my participants moved to feminist/gay-friendly work places. This issue has never been explored before and constitutes a wholly new contribution to knowledge.

Following on from Chapter 4 which focused on the relation between the cohabiters and their significant others in terms of disclosure of their cohabitation, Chapter 5 explored the cohabiting couples' daily life and practices. By the time I started analysing this, I had also come to the position of cohabiting with my partner, and that significantly changed the ways I looked at and interpreted the interview data. Before that, I just understood what they 'said', trying to recall my participants' facial expressions, the tone, the pose and the feelings that I had witnessed during the interviews. But after I started living with my girlfriend, I became aware of what my participants really 'meant'. For example, Hosu (L, 29, w/Penni) said that one of her best memories with her partner in her daily life was going together to a convenience store and having instant noodles at night after work. To be honest, I did not fully understand why such a trivial thing was one of her happiest moments for her until I began living with my girlfriend. Dio (G, 29, w/Garam) also said that the good thing in his cohabitation was the fact that every moment with Garam became special. For instance, Dio said that he hated eating alone, but when they started living together, he

ate together with Garam and he was very happy about this. Many other participants also mentioned the advantage of being together and doing things together, for example watching telly together, taking a walk or shopping together, which seem neither a big deal nor special. However, they were actually key to cohabitation as couples experienced their intimacy through being and doing things together. It was the everyday, the mundane, that gave cohabitation its significance.

I began Chapter 5 by exploring the meaning of home for the cohabiters, and then moved on to their emulating and/or rejecting traditional familial and heterosexual gender norms in negotiating the relationship with their 'mother-in-law', having pets and the division of housework and financial contributions to the household. First, I discussed the meaning of home to the cohabiting couples, something that has not been done before. A considerable number of my participants described their home as a shelter for doing intimacy and a place to enjoy socials with their friends, particularly same-sex couples. Whether heterosexual or homosexual, cohabiting couples were aware that their relationship was not recognised by others. Hence they were very careful in public. Instead, they tended to do intimacy with their partner at home. In addition, lesbian and gay couples in particular identified home as where they could spend their private time with their friends. They often reported that meeting their friends outside in public, for example in a pub or coffee shop, was stressful because they had to be careful not to reveal their sexual identity. In this sense, both different-sex and same-sex couples turned out to perceive their home as special, beyond just being a place to live together. These perceptions have not been discussed before in Korean research elsewhere.

Certain new themes emerged from analysing my participants' daily cohabitation. One of these was emulating conventional family norms by doing family practices among same-sex couples. They did this as a way of becoming a family. Different-sex couples on the contrary rejected this. For the former, I argued that lesbian and gay cohabiting couples might have sought 'ordinariness' by doing the 'practices of ordinariness' (Heaphy, Smart and Einarsdottir 2013: 171). In other words, the homosexual cohabitees in my sample seemed to want to be recognised as a legitimate family by doing and displaying family (i.e. in the way they treated their pets) on the one hand, and simultaneously refusing some family practices with which they

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disagreed (i.e. Namul rejecting the traditional daughter-in-law role). A considerable number of my participants portrayed their pet/s as their child/ren that completed their 'own' family. Although this finding was more evident among lesbian and gay couples than heterosexuals, there was a common line among both same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples that pets functioned to help form a family, to some extent. On the other hand, when some of my interviewees found that they had to relate to their quasi in-laws, particularly their quasi mother-in-law, most strongly refused to be involved in traditional familial and heterosexual gender norms. I had two examples of one heterosexual female (Yuyu) and one lesbian participant (Namul), who did not want to take on the expected daughter-in-law roles, though both showed some moments of doing and displaying family in other contexts. In contrast, a heterosexual male participant (Ken) showed exactly the opposite attitude with his quasi mother-in-law. Ken (HM, 30) complained that his 'quasi' mother-in-law did not treat him in a traditional familial way. These very different examples of female and male cohabiters suggest that they did not simply follow traditional family norms, but developed them through selectively accommodating and denying family practices. Again, this connection between cohabitation and family practices has not been discussed before.

Last but not least, the way in which cohabiting couples divided their housework and financial contribution to the household appeared to be done differently – doing, undoing and redoing gender. Research shows that couples living together can have a relatively more equal relationship in terms of sharing the housework and household finances in doing and undoing gender (Goldberg 2013). However, I found in my research that the mechanism of 'doing' gender was more complex than the binary of doing and undoing gender. This required adding 'redoing' gender to it. By redoing gender, I refer to 'returning' to (traditional) gender roles, rather than 'redefining' them (Connell 2010) or 'changing the norms to which one is accountable' (Walzer 2008: 6). The triangular mechanism of doing, undoing and redoing gender also turned out to be done differently among heterosexual, gay and lesbian couples.

Most of the heterosexual interviewees who intended not to marry but to remain cohabitees appeared to undo gender consciously, trying to avoid doing gender consciously also (for example Cogito, Sinbi, Shim, Ahreum and Dongchi). For

instance, those couples said that they discussed how to allocate housework and their financial contribution equally from the beginning of living together. Most of them decided to have a joint account to pay the bills and living expenses, separating their own account. They sometimes pooled money exactly half-and-half (Cogito and Sinbi) and sometimes based on a ratio of how much they earned (Pony and Shim, and Ahreum and Dongchi). When a female earned more than her male partner, she contributed more money to their household and her male partner took charge of housework more by agreement, in order to achieve a fair division of housework and financial management (Ahreum and Dongchi). Housework was mostly done equally by both partners and sometimes a male participant complained that he did almost all the housework while his female partner did hardly anything (Cogito and Sinbi). Additionally, when a heterosexual male partner (Pony) participated less in housework, his female partner (Shim) seriously complained about it and made notes to show Pony how many times she did housework (for example washing dishes, doing the laundry, cleaning and cooking) compared to him. These kind of active and conscious efforts to equalize housework and finance separation were evident among some couples.

In contrast, those who were cohabiting with an expectation to marry in the near future showed different ways of doing gender. They seemed to have comparably less gender-conscious mindsets than those who decided to continue cohabiting and not to marry, so that a majority of them was found to do gender 'unconsciously'. They undid gender more as a function of not yet being married, but could be reluctant in this. For example, one participant (Ken) said that he and his cohabiting partner agreed with the 'wife management' or the 'whole wage system' (Pahl 1989: 67), meaning that the male hands over his whole wage to the female. This financial management is a very traditional stance among married couples in Korea. Moreover, some of those who considered marrying soon even said that they would have to 'redo' gender after marrying as a son's (or Jangnam's in Pony's case) duty, for example, was to make his wife-to-be visit and look after his parents regularly and serve his patrilineal ancestor ceremonies on New Year's Day and Korean Harvest Day (see Pony and Ken). What is interesting at this point is that only male cohabiters were determined to redo gender after marriage and some of them were already unconsciously redoing gender while cohabiting, whereas females were constantly

concerned about their male partner and if they would return to doing gender. For example, Shim (HW, 32, w/Pony) said that the longer their living together continued, the more her partner was redoing gender (unconsciously, at least to her knowledge) by participating less in housework. This was also reported by Yuyu (HW, 32). On the one hand, this might suggest that it is easier for men to return to traditional gender roles because they are advantageous for men and disadvantageous for women. On the other hand, it may also be that men feel pressured to do gender and return to traditional gender roles after undoing gender for some time as a way of carrying out filial piety towards their parents, given what Pony and Ken said: 'I should make my girlfriend take on the daughter-in-law roles for my parents after marrying', because they had grown up with the idea that this was their role. This triangular ways of doing/undoing/redoing gender in heterosexual cohabiting couples and the gendered differences in the mechanism have not been investigated before, and thus this is an original finding.

For gays and lesbians the complex ways of doing gender appeared to be done differently from heterosexuals. Goldberg (2013) particularly argues that same-sex couples tend to do and undo gender simultaneously because the initial status of their 'same' sex blurs the boundary between feminine and masculine types of housework and even the feminine nature of housework itself. She also points out that lesbian and gay couples' refashioning the way of seeing housework as not characterised as feminine or masculine tasks by doing and undoing gender through the division of housework (i.e. allocating housework depending on one's interest and time availability) should not be understood as one partner doing more feminine (wife) tasks and the other doing more masculine ones in the way of heterosexual (married) couples, because the former views this differently (see also Lev 2008). These arguments are partly consistent with my findings and partly not. Almost all of my gay interviewees thought their division of housework and finance was fairly equal. Although over half were solely responsible for either the housework or the financial contribution, they considered this one-sided division as balanced in the light of their time-availability and interest, rather than interpreting it as mirroring heterosexuals' wife and husband roles. Interestingly, however, one of the gay interviewees (Bud and his partner) identified with his heterosexual parents. Bud (G, 42) seemed very proud of the conventional ways in which he was solely in charge of housework and

managing the wife-whole-wage-system like his mother while his male partner was solely responsible for supporting their household financially like his father. Defending this traditional heterosexual married couples' way of housework and financial division, he argued that his cohabiting relationship was akin to heterosexuals' marriage. He wanted his cohabiting relation to become recognised by others as a legitimate relationship just like a heterosexual married one and indeed made huge efforts in conforming to traditional gendered roles. I conceptualised this process as 'redoing' gender. The reason why I termed it redoing rather than doing or undoing gender was because what Bud did was actually a return to the conventional gendered family by following gendered family roles. In using 'redoing' gender here, I would like to draw a clear distinction to 'redefining' gender and other similar concepts (see Walzer 2008; Connell 2010; Morash and Haarr 2012). As I noted earlier in this section as well as in Chapter 5, I coined 'redoing' gender as meaning 'returning' to do gender and furthermore gendered family practices. What the gay participant (Bud) and the heterosexuals (Ken and Pony) had in common was that they desired to have their own family, leaving their current cohabitation and (re)turning to 'family' by engaging in certain family practices and I interpret this process as 'redoing' gender. This conceptualisation of redoing gender as returning to do gender is an extension of that theorization.

The redoing of gender was most evident among lesbians and also differently, compared to heterosexual and gay participants. Almost all of the lesbian interviewees agreed that they managed a joint account fairly paid by both partners. However, what was interesting, or perhaps could be problematic, was that the vast majority of the lesbians said that there was a main person in charge of the housework. To put it differently, there was a 'wife' expected to deal with the household chores in the lesbian couples, although they shared paying the bills and living expenses fairly equally. This existence of a person solely responsible for running the household was also reported by the gay couples. However, there was a significant difference between the lesbians and gays in terms of the distinction of femme/butch and bottom/top. The gay participants seldom talked about whether they were top or bottom, except for Bud who had trouble with his partner due to their same sexual position as top. Also, no one said that the reason why some of them did most of the housework was because they were bottom, for example, but they explained it in

terms of more time at home or being more skilled at it than their partner. This is in stark contrast to the lesbians who indicated the correlation between their sexual position (whether femme or butch) and the responsibility for doing housework or who at least described the situation in similar ways, even if they did not use the words femme and butch. Although most of the lesbian couples tried to deal with the division of housework and finance equally in the way of doing and undoing gender on the one hand, they seemed to return to doing or redoing gender by tacitly agreeing that the femme was in charge of doing the housework. This finding that Korean cohabiting lesbian couples turned out to conform to traditional gender roles in the sense that femmes tended to do traditional women's roles and butches men's is inconsistent with some of the existing western (see Lev 2008) and Korean research (See Ryu Hyejin 2010), and thus this is new and contributes to current knowledge in this field.

6-4. Research Implications

Despite the fact that Confucian traditionalism is deeply embedded in Korea, it is obvious that Korean society is changing, particularly in terms of attitudes towards the idea of the family as 'sacred'. National statistics show decreasing marriage rates, increasing divorce rates and increasing numbers of single-person households (KOSIS 2013a, 2013c; OECD 2014b). The population of same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples is also on the rise, and is increasingly reflected in the media, although there are no official statistics on their numbers. In the media heterosexual cohabiting couples are dealt with in gendered ways: cohabiting women are stigmatized for not remaining virgins and being sexually promiscuous, while men are portrayed as irresponsible to their female partner and as unfilial to their parents. Cohabitation by same-sex couples in contrast has been less (re)presented since homosexuality remains taboo.

My research on Korean cohabiting couples has five important implications related to family and gender studies. First, it contributes to our understanding of how cohabitation is shaped in East Asian countries where Confucianism is culturally dominant. In western countries where cohabitation has been examined since the late 1960s, cohabiters, particularly in the USA, were at times stigmatised as violating Christian values, and they were understood to be influenced by individualism and

feminism. However, this is not the case for non-western countries. For instance, in the Confucian context of Korea cohabitation is perceived as unfilial behaviour. Women as well as men – but for different reasons – are concerned about cohabiting and revealing this to their parents; about half of my male participants appeared to be worried about their parents who would expect especially their first son (or Jangnam) to practise filiality by bringing home a legitimate daughter-in-law to look after them and their patrilineal ancestors. This is also associated with some Korean heterosexual women's choice of cohabitation over marriage; not only are they influenced by modernising ideas, but they also do not want to conform to Confucian values by inserting themselves into the patriarchal family system and doing subservient jobs for their husband's family in the name of filial piety as a daughter-in-law. The prevalent idea of filial piety is a primary factor shaping cohabitation in Korea; this also has relevance in East Asian contexts in which Confucianism is commonly embedded, unlike in western countries. The issue of filiality in cohabitation – which is not much discussed in either Family or Gender Studies – thus gains heightened prominence and warrants further examination as a factor in socio-cultural change.

Second, my research suggests a different paradigm for interpreting the relationship between cohabiters and their parents with regard to the disclosure pattern revealed in my thesis. The important point is that parents were the group least disclosed to among my interviewees. Given that this is the case, one might argue that some cohabiters seek a couple-centred relationship with their partner which excludes their parents from that relationship. This was not the case for those heterosexual cohabitees who saw their relationship as a precursor to marriage. Put another way, some Korean cohabiting couples in my research might have intentionally decided not to let their parents know about their cohabitation in order to create an autonomous and democratised couple-centred relation without interference from their parents and without finding themselves transferred back into the patriarchal family system, particularly in the case of women. The decision to focus on a couple-centred lifestyle may ultimately point to couple citizenship, avoiding family-centred relationships in favour of peer-centred cohabitation. Notably a considerable number of my participants (whether heterosexual or homosexual), who hid their cohabitation from their parents, actively shared their private life with their friends in order not to feel isolated, and more importantly, to run their cohabitation on their terms by selectively

deciding whom to involve in the couple relationship and whom not. One implication of this is the need for more extended explorations of the re-shaping of parents and adult-child relationships in Korean society as new living arrangements take hold. This is closely associated with the Korean welfare system which is very different from that of north-west European countries. The relationship between parents and adult child is inevitably co-dependent in Korea as there is little welfare support for the young or the old. Adults need financial support from their parents until they can be independent (usually after marriage) and parents need care from their child/ren after they retire. This co-dependent relationship between parents and adult child/ren worked in Confucian culture. However, this is changing and it needs further study, not least in its gendered dimensions.

Third, my research proposes a further exploration of cohabitation in terms of inequality regarding gendered matters such as pay gaps and disclosure gaps between cohabiting partners and among cohabiters as a whole. My participants were on average well educated and mostly had good jobs and salaries. However, there were some discrepancies among them, whether they were female or male or whether heterosexual or homosexual. To understand these inequalities better it would be useful to a) have a larger sample to investigate the extent to which my findings could be replicated across larger groups, and b) do further research to understand how these discrepancies operate.

Fourth, my research raises questions as to how sexual identity is implicated in the transformation of society from traditionalism to modernity in Korea in terms of creating family-like, marriage-like or divergent relational forms of living together. My findings do not suggest that homosexual Korean cohabiting couples replicate the relational form of heterosexual married couples, but rather that cohabiters seek a new type of couple relationship which one might describe as 'family-without-marriage'. In western culture the situation for cohabiting lesbians and gays has changed significantly in the past half century in terms of a rising and relatively high degree of social acceptance of cohabitation, same-sex marriage rights and citizenship. This shift in western countries suggests the possibility for new rights and, simultaneously, it can also be read as another form of conservatism, reproducing certain aspects of heteronormativity and participating in new traditionalism. As Heaphy and his

colleagues (2013) discuss, however, the cohabitation of same-sex couples and the ways they live can also be interpreted as reconfiguring the nature of couple relationships. Drawing upon the notion of 'ordinariness' among their participants (whether in civil partnerships or not), the researchers argue that practices of ordinariness among young same-sex couples are not only linked to similarities with conventional heterosexual marriage relations, but also to differences from them. On the one hand, they found that same-sex couples tended to follow certain practices that heterosexual (married) couples do in terms of the way same-sex couples view their relationship, the way they ceremonize it and the way they live their cohabitation (or civil partnership). On the other hand, Heaphy et al. (2013) suggest that it may not be that same-sex couples imitate how different-sex ones live, but rather that heterosexual couples become more similar to the ways in which homosexual couples organise their lives. For instance, different-sex couples have become more equal than before in terms of the division of housework and finance, something that is already more common among same-sex couples. Heaphy and his colleagues (2013) also indicate that the limit explaining the relationships of same-sex couples in heterosexual terms may be due to the lack of a language in which to describe new forms of couple relationship. This view seems supported in my findings where same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples exhibited selective accommodation and rejection of family practices in a complex way of doing, undoing and redoing of gender. Here the exploration of cross-cultural similarities and differences warrants further exploration.

Lastly, and in this context, my research suggests diverse approaches to how we might view cohabitation. More specifically, one might ask what cohabitees are aiming for when they cohabit. They may want to model new family forms, versions of families, or they may not want to model this. Depending on their particular backgrounds, contexts and histories as well as on factors such as sexuality, social class and educational and occupational backgrounds, my participants had diverse views on how they regarded cohabitation, and this issue needs further exploration with a larger and more diverse sample. My thesis is a first step in conducting comparative research on same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples in Korea. As a researcher I hope to have paved the ways in this thesis for future researchers who want to study relationships and families in Confucian cultures and other comparative contexts.

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6-5. Suggestions for Future Research

There are several issues that I would want to expand upon based on this research. First, the issue of cohabitation is a steadily growing phenomenon in some Asian and otherwise conservative countries such as Korea, whereas it may already be fully established in western countries. But there are still very few studies in those countries where cohabitation is a comparatively recent phenomenon. These countries are often different from western ones in terms of socio-cultural context. This difference needs to be dealt with in a more sustained way. Second, I would also like to investigate other types of cohabiting couple relationships, such as bisexual or transgender or mixed combinations of different sexual identity ones, because bisexual and transgender people are even more marginalised than lesbians and gays, at least in Korea. Third, serial cohabitation was observed in my interview data and it suggests that cohabitation is moving into a transition from being a serious taboo to becoming normalised. In other words, it shows that intimate living structures in Korea are changing. Therefore, studies on cohabitation should investigate cohabiting couples over time. These various ways of exploring the lives of cohabiting couples would advance this field further.

Conclusion

Researching both Korean different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples was not easy, not only because there is little research that pays attention to their experiences and voices, but also because existing Korean studies tend to focus on the reason why heterosexual people choose to cohabit, the interrelation between cohabitation and divorce, and cohabitation as a conventional family form in terms of family diversity. Most existing research on Korean cohabiting couples does not consider what motivated people to decide to live together with their intimate partner, questions of disclosing their cohabitation to significant others (i.e. family members, friends and work colleagues), and how they actually live their daily cohabitation life. As discussed in the Introduction and elsewhere, the academic research trend in Korea seems to have jumped from dealing with the matter of cohabitation in relation to divorce and delaying marriage in the 1990s to integrating cohabitation into the idea of 'families' as if it was already accepted in society. What is problematic here is the fact that academics have moved very quickly although the public and society in

general still seem conservative and against cohabitation. In addition, the articulated lives of same-sex cohabiting couples have hardly been investigated as academics dealing with LGBT issues tend to focus on working towards claiming same-sex marriage rights. This thesis therefore makes an original contribution to family studies in the Korean context and offers new knowledge about cohabitation both in relation to heterosexual and to gay and lesbian communities. It is also the first comparative study on Korean same-sex and different-sex cohabiting couples, written in English. Hence, I as a researcher think that this thesis can pave the way for future researchers who seek to investigate Korean heterosexual and/or homosexual cohabiting couples.

By way of ending this thesis I want to go back to how Pony, one of my heterosexual male participants, described cohabitation. At the end of every interview, I asked participants how they would define cohabitation in a short sentence. Pony surprised me. He said that 'cohabitation to me is a campaign that I do, in spite of knowing that I will give it up and have to surrender'. I did not fully understand what he meant and asked him for a further explanation. He said:

> I'm doing cohabitation with my girlfriend because I don't have any
> problem with this relationship. But I know that my parents would care
> about this and will never accept my cohabitation relation. Hence, I will
> have to marry someone else if Shim doesn't marry me till the end, so that
> I can conduct my duty of filial piety to my parents because I'm the
> Jangnam.

Many Korean people, including our parents' generation, still do not understand any different forms of relationship apart from the heterosexual, married-couple relation. This is why I examined this issue and hope to see in the near future that people can choose more freely any relationship they want without fears or worries.

Appendix 1. Consent Form

Hwajeong Yoo

Centre for Women's Studies

University of York

York, YO10 5DD

United Kingdom

Email: hy523@york.ac.uk

Confidentiality assurance and copyright agreement

Dissertation title: Living Cohabitation in Contemporary Korea: The Experiences of Lesbians, Gays and Heterosexuals

This is to certify that I _____ agree to have the interviews recorded and to the anonymised transcript of my interview being quoted and published in excerpts (or in full) in the PhD thesis of Hwajeong Kim-Yoo, and in associated publications. I am aware of that the transcribed interview and the questionnaire (both anonymized) will be seen only by the researcher (Hwajeong Kim-Yoo) and her supervisor. I am also aware of that I have every right to refuse to answer any questions I do not feel comfortable with and to remove myself from the research at any stage during the research process.

Further to this, I recognise that this thesis may be accessed by future students from the Centre for Women's Studies dissertation archive.

Name:

Preferred Pseudonym:

Date:

Signed:

Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. Beginning Cohabitation

1.1 Why did you decide to cohabit?

1.2 What factor most importantly affected the decision to start cohabiting? How did you decide to cohabit?

1.3 Why did you choose cohabitation rather than just dating (living apart) or marriage?

1.4 Who proposed to cohabit first? If it was you, why did you do it? And how did the other party react?

2. Disclosure of Cohabitation to Others

2.1 Who knows about your cohabitation relationship?
   - Parents?
   - Family members?
   - Friends?
   - Colleagues?
   - Neighbours?

2.2 What was their reaction when you told them that you are cohabiting?

2.3 How did you decide the extent to which you disclose the nature of your relationship?

2.4 If your parents and your partner's parents know about your cohabiting relationship, what is your position in your partner's family, and your partner's position in your family?

2.5 How do you relate to your partner's family?

2.6 How do you call your partner when you talk about your partner to other people? In other words, what are your title and your partner's title? (e.g. wife, husband, girlfriend, boyfriend etc.)

2.7 How many people around you have cohabitation experience or are currently cohabiting? Do you think there are many people cohabiting?

3. Experiences of Cohabitation

3.1 How do you organise your daily life as a cohabitant? For example, division of housework and finance matters.

3.2 How do you spend your time at home and how about your partner?

3.3 Has your attitude to cohabitation changed over time, and if so, how?

3.4 What about your partner's attitude?

3.5 Do you have any issues in cohabiting with your partner? If you have, what are they? And how have you dealt with them? Any strategies?

3.6 And what are the advantages in cohabiting?

3.7 Do you have any previous cohabitation experience? Are there any differences or similarities in your current situation from your former one?

4. Perceptions of Cohabitation and Gender

4.1 Do you think women and men think differently about cohabitation?

4.2 Do you think cohabitation life would be different for you if you were a wo/man (for man/woman)?

4.3 If you were a heterosexual, would the meaning of cohabitation be different from your current situation? (for lesbian/gay couples)

5. General Views on Cohabitation

5.1 What do you think about cohabitation in Korea?

5.2 Do you see cohabitation as a long-term relationship or a short-term relationship? Why?

5.3 If you had decided not to cohabit, what differences would you expect from the current situation?

5.4 Have your views on cohabitation changed after cohabiting, compared to before cohabiting? If so, why?

Appendix 3. Information Letter to Participants

Hwajeong Yoo: Centre for Women's Studies, University of York, York, UK

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for being interested in my research and agreeing to take part in it. As you know I am doing a research project as a part of my PhD dissertation on cohabiting couples' experiences. The research will involve one face-to-face interview and a short questionnaire. That is, a couple will be interviewed separately if both agree to participate in the interview. The interview will take approximately one to two hours and will be recorded on two recorders. The questionnaire contains demographic questions mainly about your gender, age, length of cohabitation, education background, profession, wage, residence area, etc. I might, however, send a follow-up e-mail if I need clarification and/or additional information to the answers you have provided.

The interview will take place where you prefer, for example, your home, your office, a local library or a café. The audio recording will be transcribed and translated. All information you provide will be anonymized. You can choose a preferred pseudonym.

The last thing I need to mention is that this research is conducted without any funding, and hence financial compensation may not be available. Instead, I would like to provide you with tea, cakes or foods so as to show my appreciation for your time spent for the interview.

If you can confirm that you are still willing to participate in the interview, please indicate your available dates and times. And please find the attached Consent Form that you will need to fill in when we meet for the interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime on either my mobile or my e-mail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Hwajeong Yoo

Appendix 4. Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your age? Please indicate the year when you were born.

3. How long have you been cohabiting with your current partner? Please indicate the year and month when you started cohabiting.

4. How many former cohabitation experiences do you have?

5. What is your highest educational qualification?

6. What is your profession?

7. What is your annual wage?

8. Where do you live?

9. What type of residence do you live in?

10. How many rooms are there in your home?

Appendix 5. Biography of Interviewees

Note 1) The pseudonym and in brackets the sexual orientation, age, partner's pseudonym if interviewed are listed below in order.

Note 2) I have used four abbreviations to designate sexual orientation: L (lesbian), G (gay), HW (heterosexual woman) and HM (heterosexual man).

Female Participants

Jinny (L, 45, w/Namul)

Jinny worked in an office. She began her cohabitation with Namul in April 2010 and it was her first cohabitation. When the interview was conducted, her cohabitation had lasted about two years.

Lime (L, 38, w/Agasa)

Lime worked in an office. Her cohabitation with Agasa was her second cohabitation. Her first cohabitation ended after three years and her current cohabitation had lasted about three and a half years at the time of the interview.

Basa (L, 37, w/ED)

Basas worked in an office. She started cohabiting with Ed for the first time in March 2009 and it had lasted about three and a half years at the time of the interview.

Sinbi (HW, 37, w/Cogito)

Sinbi used to work in a civic organisation and met Cogito in her work place. They were colleagues. She had lived alone before she started cohabiting with her partner. It was her first cohabitation. She was working as a freelance researcher and translator

at the time of the interview. Her cohabitation had lasted about four years at the time of the interview.

Agasa (L, 35, w/Lime)

Agasa was a nurse. She started cohabiting in December 2008 from the day she first met Lime. It was her first cohabitation and had lasted about three and a half years at the time of the interview.

Anna (L, 33, w/Tina)

Anna used to be a student, but she started her own business with her partner at the time of the interview. It was her first cohabitation and had lasted about eleven months.

Ed (L, 32, w/Basa)

Ed was a freelance. She started cohabiting in March 2009, her first cohabitation, and had lasted about three and a half years at the time of the interview.

Namul (L, 32, w/Jinny)

Namul worked in an office. Her lesbian identity was once revealed to her mother because of her ex-girlfriend who was her former cohabitee. She had second cohabitation with Jinny and it had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Choikang (L, 32, w/Mim)

Choikang worked in an office. Her lesbian identity was once revealed to her mother because of her sister-in-law. She started cohabiting with Mim, her first cohabitation, and it had lasted about one and a half years at the time of the interview.

Alice (HW, 32, w/Wonseok)

Alice worked in an office. She met Wonseok through her work colleague's introduction while she was cohabiting with her ex-partner who was her first cohabitee. She started her second cohabitation with Wonseok after that she was cheating on her ex-cohabitee was revealed. Her current cohabitation had lasted about six months at the time of the interview. After one year of cohabiting, they lived separately with the couple relationship remained.

Shim (HW, 31, w/Pony)

Shim was a student doing MA at the time of the interview. She met Pony in her university. While she was cohabiting with Pony, which was her first cohabitation, she kept being asked by Pony to marry him and she said no. After a few months later the interview, they broke up and lived separately. Her first cohabitation with Pony ended in about five years.

Yuyu (HW, 31)

Yuyu was a student doing MA at the time of the interview. She met her partner in her university. After she started cohabiting with her partner, her first cohabitation, she had a few troubles with her partner's mother who wanted her to marry, not to cohabit. Yet, Yuyu and her partner were still in a good relationship and their cohabitation had lasted about four years at the time of the interview.

Sadly, Yuyu's partner could not find the time to interview. But when I met Yuyu and Shim by chance later and we talked about Shim's break-up with Pony, Yuyu said that she deliberately did not mention the interview to her partner because she was worried if her partner was motivated by the interview to marry her like it happened to Shim and her partner.

Tina (L, 30, w/Anna)

Tina used to work in an office, but she began her own business with her partner at the time of the interview. She started her first cohabitation with Anna in July 2011 and it had lasted about eleven months at the time of the interview.

Soran (L, 30, w/Ray)

Soran used to work in an office, but she was temporarily unemployed at the time of the interview. Her cohabitation with Ray was her first experience and it had lasted about six years at the time of the interview.

Ray (L, 29, w/Soran)

Ray was a PhD student at the time of the interview. She started her cohabitation with Soran in June 2006 and it was her second cohabitation. It had lasted about six years at the time of the interview.

Ahreum (HW, 29, w/Dongchi)

Ahreum worked in an office. She did not have a plan to marry because she did not agree with the patriarchal marriage and family system. This was also agreed by her partner. Her current cohabitation with Dongchi was her first experience and it had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Mim (L, 28, w/Choikang)

Mim was an MA student. She began her cohabitation with Choikang in March 2011 and it was her first cohabitation. It had lasted about one and a half years at the time of the interview.

Hosu (L, 28, w/Penni)

Hosu worked in an office at the time of the interview. She began her cohabitation with Penni in October 2011 and it was her second cohabitation. Her former cohabitation ended after two years and her current cohabitation with Penni had lasted about eleven months at the time of the interview.

Penni (L, 28, w/Hosu)

Penni used to work in an office, but she was working part-time jobs at the time of the interview. She started cohabiting with Hosu in October 2011 and it was her first cohabitation. She and her partner had a plan to immigrate into Canada so as to legally marry and they did after a couple of months later the interview.

Sunyoung (HW, 28, w/Sarang)

Sunyoung was a PhD student. She started cohabiting with Sarang in August 2008 and it was her fourth cohabitation. After the interview, about a year later she broke up with Sarang. Several months later, she met a new guy and started her fifth cohabitation with a plan to marry in the near future. At the time of the interview, Sunyoung's fourth cohabitation with Sarang had lasted about five years.

Male Participants

Ahn (G, 44, w/Jaekyoung)

Ahn used to be a doctor, but he was temporarily unemployed at the time of the interview. No one knew about his sexual identity, except his gay friends. His current cohabitation with Jaekyoung was his first experience and it had lasted about five and a half years at the time of the interview.

<u>Bud (G, 41)</u>

Bud was a freelance writer. He was the only gay interviewee who frequently talked about his and his partner's sexual position (bottom/top). Bud's current cohabitation was his second experience and it had lasted about seven years at the time of the interview. His former cohabitation ended after two years.

Bud's partner did not take part in the interview because Bud did not want him to do. Instead, Bud generously shared his partner's experiences with me.

<u>Jaekyoung (G, 40, w/Ahn)</u>

Jaekyoung used to be a doctor, but he was working as a representative in a gay organisation (Chingusai) at the time of the interview. His cohabitation with Ahn was his first experience and it had lasted about five and a half years at the time of the interview.

<u>Kenneth (G, 39)</u>

Kenneth was a professional researcher. He began his cohabitation in August 2005 and it was his first cohabitation. It had lasted about seven years at the time of the interview.

Kenneth's partner did not take part in the interview because he did not want his partner to do. Instead, Kenneth generously shared stories about his partner with me.

<u>Cogito (HM, 39, w/Sinbi)</u>

Cogito used to work in a civic organisation. He was working as a freelance researcher and translator at the time of the interview. He began his first cohabitation with Sinbi in September 2008 and it had lasted about four years at the time of the interview.

Leslie (G, 36, w/Jinseok)

Leslie worked in a gay organisation (Donginryun) as a representative. His current cohabitation with Jinseok was his second experience. His first cohabitation was ended after about a year and the current one had lasted about two years at the time of the interview. He suggested to his partner to have open relationships and it was agreed by his partner Jinseok.

Jinseok (G, 36, w/Jinseok)

Jinseok used to be a dentist, but he was temporarily unemployed at the time of the interview. He began his cohabitation in November 2010 and it was his first cohabitation. His cohabitation had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Wonseok (HM, 35, w/Alice)

Wonseok was a freelance writer. His cohabitation with Alice was his first experience and it had lasted about six months at the time of the interview. After one year of cohabiting, they lived separately with the couple relationship remained.

Jeongyol (G, 34)

Jeongyol worked in a gay organisation (Donginryun). He began his cohabitation in January 2006 and it was his first experience. It had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Unfortunately, his partner could not find the time to take part in the interview as he was too busy with his new business. Jeongyol's partner was HIV positive.

Garam (G, 33, w/Dio)

Garam worked in a civic organisation as a lawyer. Although he intended to keep his cohabitation secret, it was disclosed to his parents by chance. His cohabitation with

Dio was his first experience and it had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Pony (HM, 32, w/Shim)

Pony was a civil servant. His cohabitation with Shim was his first experience and it had lasted about four and a half years at the time of the interview. After the interview, he broke up the relationship because he wanted to marry and his partner did not.

Ken (HM, 29)

Ken worked in an office. He was the only one who was not very familiar with the idea of feminism or gender equality. After about a year of the interview, he was thinking of marrying his cohabitee but he had to break up with her partner due to his parents' disapproval. His cohabitation was his first experience and it had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Unfortunately, Ken's partner did not participate in the interview. In the interview, Ken said that he did not even tell her about the interview because he expected her partner to disagree with the interview and might not want him to interview.

Dongchi (HM, 29, w/Ahreum)

Dongchi was studying to become a vet at the time of the interview. As he was not employed, he did most of housework and his partner paid the living expenses and the rent. Their cohabitation was not revealed to their both parents. His cohabitation with Ahreum was his first experience and it had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Dio (G, 28, w/Garam)

Dio was a freelance computer programmer. He began his cohabitation in August 2010 and it was his first cohabitation. It had lasted about two years at the time of the interview.

Sarang (HM, 28, w/Sunyoung)

Sarang worked in an office. He had cohabited with Sunyoung for about six years in spite of his parents' and friends' disapproval. His cohabitation with Sunyoung had lasted about five years at the time of the interview. He ended up breaking up after about a year of the interview.

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