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ABSTRACT

Max Weber argued that traditional values impede the development of capitalism in Confucian societies. Korea is an economic success, yet is also known as the most Confucian of East Asian countries. This thesis seeks to explain the marriage between a thriving consumer-based economy and a traditional Confucian value system.

Broadly, it was found that Koreans are committed to uniquely adapted values that while faithful to their Confucian origins, are also products of contemporary Korean history. What results are core values that *appear* to be staid in traditional terms, but are in effect driving forces for economic growth and national unity.

Within these findings, it is revealed that 1) Confucian ideals of family relationships, rank and essential virtues are at the forefront of the Korean imaginary; 2) it is possible to harmonize the terms *modern* and *traditional*, 3) that capitalism is culturally constructed and therefore not fully subject to Weberian limitations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Overview

South Korea has developed faster than any other country over the past forty years (Yee, 2000). Korea¹ is the world's most wired country, one of the signs that modern life there has, in many ways, surpassed other nations, such as the United States, that have in the past been viewed as models for modernization. Between 1946 and 1995 the proportion of people living in cities went from 14% to 79% in Korea. During the same time period, fishing and agriculture dropped from 75% to 12% and high school enrolment rose from 20% to 96% (KOTRA). Korea is also considered to be the most Confucian country in the world – more so than Japan or China, despite the fact that Confucianism is an import from China, and appears to have maintained a Confucian-based value system that is seemingly compatible with its enormous growth over past decades.

Although it no longer dominates Korean political and social life as a prescriptive orthodoxy, it has gone underground and continues to covertly shape behavior and social organization in Korea. In this sense, the Korean Confucian tradition has proved remarkably resilient. (Rozman 1991, p. 204)

Max Weber, in his pivotal work, *The Religion of China* (1968), saw Confucianism as counterproductive to industrialization and predicted that either a lack of industrialization or the demise of Confucianism would occur with time. In Korea, it seems that neither of these predictions has transpired. One can confidently say that despite many years of exclusionist policy towards the outside world that labelled Korea the “Hermit Kingdom”, the country is now a major player in the global economy and is also a thriving consumer-based society. One can say with less confidence that traditional

¹ South Korea is commonly referred to as “Korea”. In any case where North Korea is referred to it will be specified.

Confucian values are dominant in Korean society. This thesis will examine the Confucian value system in Korea within the context of Weber's prediction.

Along the same lines as Weber, contemporary experts have entered into some lively debates as to 1) whether or not Confucianism has actually contributed to the growth of Korea. It is commonly held that globalization and modernization are powerful forces for changing societies and their core values. Scholars such as Weber and others of his time also enjoyed maintaining a polarization between the terms *modern* and *traditional*. Conservative modernization theory² generally held that one replaces the other to a certain degree, and; 2) whether Confucianism is now dead or dying as an ethical, political or legal system.

This issue of value change is considered through the examination of the presence and importance of Confucian values in Korea today. By way of interviews and observation, insight is gained as to the degree to which the Confucian value system is still present in South Korea and to some of the reasons why this may be so.

Highlighting the case of South Korea makes sense: It is the most Confucian country, and it has seen the most intense debate over the prospects for Confucianism. (Rozman, 2002, p. 12)

Given the fact that one of the main tenets of Confucianism is the maintenance of a rigid social structure, we are presented with the following questions: how has the seeming preservation of traditional values occurred in the face of such economic growth and change? Is the Confucian value system in the process of disappearing? To what extent is Weber's sociological perspective correct? What are the areas of strength and weakness in his theories in the case of Korea? This thesis will answer these questions through the

² Referring to classical modernization theory developed by W. W. Rostow. (*The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 1960.)

examination of the personal values of individuals by way of interviews and literature research on the subjects of value change, East Asia and Confucianism.

Under the assumption that there is more to this subject than the mere influence of modernization, cultural history and nationalism as influences on traditional values in Korea are examined. With these aspects under consideration in formulating the arguments of this thesis, and with the aim of contributing to the body of work in this area, an elaboration of the concept of *Koreanness* is developed.

Some factors that are considered in terms of value change in this thesis include:

1 - The cultural history of the nation / people as an influence in terms of value change and/or retention. This is considered because values are formed and shaped by various elements such as war, geographical positioning, religion, politics and culture, each of which are integrated into the social fabric of contemporary Korean society. In this way, one must consider not only the impact of modernization on Korean cultural values also the impact of cultural values on modernization. This is a central issue in explaining why modernization is not a purely predictable process and why countries do not uniformly modernize (Inglehart, 1997).

In addition, because Korea's history is accented by contemporary colonialism and war, the issue of nationalism is also considered in the assessment of the core values of the country. It may be found that nationalism itself is a core value that permeates the social imaginary.³

³ The common set of symbols, values, institutions that make up a collective "mindset" or that which is common to a social group. The concept is borrowed from C. Castoriadis (1987).

2 – The idea that the concepts of *modern* and *traditional* are not necessarily at odds with one another as value categories. In Weber’s early 20th century world, the polarization of such concepts was generally taken for granted. Humans are hard-wired to seek pattern and organization in order to make sense of the world; however many of today’s sociologists have learned to question the value of doing this in light of the fact that although one can find tendencies in societal facts, it can be detrimental to assume categorical universalities.

There is a great deal of literature related to Korea’s adaptation to modernization and globalization given its Confucian background. However, there is little that clearly identifies the exact values of Confucian origin that are present today in Korean daily life – that have not only endured the industrialization and the development of capitalism, but may have even played a role in the great changes that have taken place. This thesis also seeks to initiate dialogue in this specific area while contributing to the body of work that has followed Weber’s initial analyses.

Theoretical Background

The main theoretical question for this thesis is provided by Max Weber, and is explored through the theories and writing of Roger Janelli, Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, Ronald Inglehart and Daniel Bell, among others. However, the assumption that a society shares a particular mindset that is comprised of particular values that are shaped by historical and cultural factors is inspired by the work of Cornelius Castoriadis. Castoriadis provides a theory of the *social imaginary* that is closely linked to the anthropological concept of culture in that it encompasses the group of values, in all their

symbolism that are common to a social group (Castoriadis, 1975). Castoriadis takes on the intangible nature of the social imaginary that can be difficult to grasp.

... it lives, essentially, in a universe of symbols that, most of the time, neither represent the real nor are necessary to conceive of it or manipulate it. (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 159)

Complementary to theories of nationalism as “imagined” by Anderson (1983), the notion of tradition as “invented” by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), and Roger Janelli’s argument that capitalism is culturally constructed (1993). As this thesis will outline in terms of the Korean social imaginary in relation to its historical and philosophical influences, the social imaginary is an institution in that it provides meaning and governance of society. As with the discussion later on values themselves, one does not have to agree with a particular value in order for it to be institutionalized or meaningful. Values are meaningful references for all people, with each person relating to them in an individual manner.

Castoriadis also combines the important element of the historical to his contribution in that he does not see a separation between the social and the historical. In the same way that time is represented differently in different societies, the social-historical is also unique to each society (Castoriadis, 1975, p. 187). While one can examine a particular society, one can not determine social change. This philosophy is used as inspiration for this thesis with the assumption that society is fluid, inextricable from history, and that meaning is created rather than derived.

Research Methodology

The greatest challenge in a qualitative study is the question of how to measure something existing within a society when it is assumed that individuals are changing and organic. Through open-ended interviews, the examination of Confucian-based values present in everyday Korean society is conducted. The analysis of the interviews is supported by the existing literature on the subject. A measure as to the *degree* to which these values are present is then discussed. Complementing the interviews, an analysis based on secondary materials, of some of Korea's core values is also made.

Of interest are 1 - particular elements of the Confucian ethical system that are meaningful today, as well as 2 – in what ways values have changed and which ones, 3 - why people remain committed to specific activities and values, and, 4 – what this means vis-à-vis Weber's theory on the incompatibility between capitalism and Confucianism.

i. Interviews: For this study, three categories of values were explored through a written interview technique. A total of twenty-two participants were interviewed, consisting of women and men between the ages of 21 and 45. The first four questions cover universal categories of family, religion, marriage, and work. Second, value categories that are particular to Korean society are examined. These are: Confucianism, loyalty, respect, and *hahn* (an emotional state that stems from collective and/or individual hardship) (Kim, 1985). Finally, value categories that are considered to be particular to a modernized/democratized society are investigated. These are freedom of speech, equality, leisure time and individualism. The interviews are examined with the intent to reveal possible points of tension and commonalities among these value categories and answers.

This is done in order to make sound statements regarding so-called traditional Confucian values present in Korea today.

ii. Field work: In easing access to participants, this study is also based on two and a half years working at the Korean Embassy in Ottawa, Canada – a literal microcosm of a Korean work environment that just happens to employ about seven Canadians. This time provided the basis for initial interest in the subject as well as access to background information and formulating questions. In addition, twenty months living and working in Busan, Korea⁴ provided the necessary contacts and exposure to the research participants and environment. There, the twenty-two participants were recruited.

iii. Literature review: Documentation sources are wide-ranging articles and books from a collection of researchers and scholars from Europe, Asia and North America. Some are experts on the impact of Confucianism in Asia, the impact of globalization in East Asia and the changing face of Korea. Others are noted scholars on the subject of value change.

To accompany the interviews, a discussion of some of Korea's core values is provided. They are assessed in terms of their origins and meaning and use in Korean society today and complement the results of the interviews.

Some of the most important sources for this study are Max Weber (1968) in the re-interpretation of his question on capitalism with reference to the case of Korea, Roger L. Janelli's work on Capitalism in South Korea (Janelli, 1993) and Ronald Inglehart

⁴ As a high school English Literature and Journalism teacher at an international school – teaching an American curriculum in English primarily to Korean and international students.

(Inglehart, 2003, 1997, 1990, and Inglehart & Baker 2000) in his theories of value change and modernization. Also pivotal are the theories of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) on invented tradition.

Ethics and methodological issues

Permission to conduct interviews was gained by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board as a minimal risk project. This is necessary when dealing with human subjects for any type of research project. The interview method for this study was initially intended to be open-ended, face-to-face interviews. It was found that face-to-face interviews were generally difficult to obtain due to language and cultural differences. Although four face-to face interviews were conducted and revealed some interesting insight into the subject, it was found that trust was difficult to obtain given my ambiguous status as a foreigner.

Another factor that came into play was the overt nervousness of participants. One declined to have the interview tape recorded, another admitted that she was overly nervous and mentioned that she felt that her answers were not “good enough”. Although the questions asked may seem quite benign in nature, the fact that they asked for personal opinions made them personal enough to be considered private. The Ethics Board makes it clear that of primary concern is to minimize the risk of negative reactions of participants. Although negative reactions were minimal, one can not predict the emotional state of a person going into an interview, nor their emotional reaction to any type of questioning.

Finally, a major setback in methodology was the lack of male participants. Of all, only four are males. This difficulty is also a reflection of the society in that friendship cohorts tend to be gender exclusive.⁵

Given these setbacks in methodology, the delivery method was altered, with the approval of the Ethics Board, to a text document that was sent by e-mail with the language of the document was in Korean only, allowing people a higher level of anonymity and ease with which to respond in their maternal language. Each participant was also sent a consent form, in Korean that explained the nature of the study and the importance of anonymity. It was made clear that participation was purely voluntary and answers were later translated into English by a professional translator.

Although the altered method resulted in more completed interviews, it was not without its own particular set of problems. Given the nature of the educational system and its emphasis on the written examination, it was clear that some participants provided answers that they thought the researcher may want to hear. In addition, many questions were answered with definitions rather than personal opinions. A final problem with this method was translation. Not being Korean introduces cultural and linguistic factors that may lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding on anyone's part, especially in the interpretation of concepts. Words, such as in the case of the term "respect", can mean very different things to different people, and the cultural difference of the meaning of terms is also significant. The translation may not be the same or the translated word may have more than one meaning. This thesis attempts to take these factors into consideration.

⁵ This is interesting since R. Janelli (1993, p. 10) noted the same problem but with female workers in his research on *chaebol* companies.

Organization

This thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter two outlines the main concepts of *Confucianism, nationalism, values, traditional* and *modern*. These concepts are addressed and problematized within the context of this subject and provide both mainstream and alternative discussions of each. This is done in order to provide a basis for the exploration of the topic. In particular, the concepts of *traditional* and *modern* require some in-depth discussion given the fact that they can be defined several ways and are associated with various important theories.

Later in the section the theoretical framework is laid out, beginning with Weber's perspective on the incompatibility between Confucianism and capitalism. This is followed by an overview of the debates surrounding the state of Confucianism in East Asia today. The subsequent literature review on value change is also combined with modernization theories as these tie in with the development with capitalism in looking at the accompanying changes in society.

Chapter three, "Confucianism and Korean values", begins to apply these theories in light of Korea and its present-day value system. Beginning with an explanation of the term *traditional* in *Korean* terms, it sets the stage for providing an argument that relies on the distinctness of the society and by implication argues that it is difficult to consider concepts in universal terms.

In order to assess Weber's theory that Confucianism would disappear with the development of capitalism, and others who similarly argue that traditional values are replaced by modern ones in the face of "modernization", the next section on the core values in Chapter three and all of Chapter four are dedicated to determining what some of

Korea's core values are, their origins and how they are manifested in society. Although many view Korea as the most traditionally-oriented country in East Asia, one can not assume this to be true. While the first part investigates core values of Korea, the second part is based on the interviews to help determine the degree to which traditional values have changed in favour of modern ones, and where such terms apply. This research proved to be important in developing a perspective on the nature of traditional Confucian values and change in Korea given the country's history of industrialization and land reforms under Japanese colonization, and subsequent post-war building and development, to the now thriving consumer-based economy. It is evident that these and the other essential factor of nationalism are weighty influences on the Korea's present-day value system and is incorporated and discussed in Chapter three.

This perspective is further developed in Chapter four whereby values that were revealed in the research section are applied to the specific Korean scenario. Under the heading, "Traditionalism as a catalyst for development", it is shown that certain values are demonstrated motivators in the Korean development of capitalism. This section outlines specific examples in Korean society whereby values of Confucian origin are linked to economic growth. This section begins to make a case using Hobsbawn's theory of invented traditions and provides evidence towards a critical review of Weber's primary theory – at least with regard to Korea.

Chapter five calls for the review of Weber's perspective given the analysis of previous sections. Since it is well agreed-upon that values are not static and that they change given various influences, it can not be denied that some areas of Korean society are experiencing this. While values change, this does not mean that Confucianism is

disappearing as Weber predicted. Given that Weber's research was originally based on China at the turn of the century, it is sure that the case of Korea will not address all of his concerns.

Finally, concluding Chapter six synthesizes the major elaborations and results of this work.

II. CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORK

In discussing value change in Korea, one must also clarify the concepts that are freely used throughout this thesis. The terms "Confucianism", "nationalism", "values", "traditional" and "modern" in general terms will be defined and discussed here.

Concepts: Confucianism, nationalism, values, tradition and modern

Confucianism: It is widely accepted that Korean culture has been greatly shaped by the Confucian tradition. Confucianism, for the purposes of this thesis is treated as an ethical philosophy that has greatly influenced the social imaginary of the Korean people. In the spirit of Castoriadis' notion of the imaginary (Castoriadis, 1987), it is not treated as a religion or structured doctrine, but as part of the social imaginary that has been shaped by this and other things including Christianity and Buddhism. Confucianism is the primary focus in terms of traditional values because it has transcended and permeated all facets of society, including the Church. "Since the Confucian tradition became a way of life, analyzing it does not take the form of asking how many believers there are, but determining how widespread and embedded its practices are" (Rozman, 2002, p. 15).

Prior to discussing the relationship between Confucianism and values, a brief explanation of the tenets of Confucianism is required.

Weiming Tu describes:

The tradition that grew from the writings of Confucius is directed both toward the behaviour and attitudes of Humanity in the interactions of daily life and toward the relationship of the human world and the cosmos. It is a sacred code of social behaviour with spiritual and political content. It has been shaped and transmitted by the cultural elite and portrayed as a unifying system of values that both reflects their worldview and enables them to maintain their status as the arbiters of propriety. (Tu, 1992, p. 2)

Confucianism is an ethical and philosophical system of thought developed from the teachings of Confucius.⁶ His philosophy was developed to guide society in moral, social and political spheres. It is sometimes referred to as a religion or quasi-religion, but there is no god associated with it, nor does it address the afterlife. It does, however, provide humans with a cosmic position whereby one's place is in harmony with the natural world rather than an influence upon it.

Confucianism was introduced to Korea from China during the Three Kingdom Period (37 BC – AD 935) along with Buddhism and became integrated and dominant by the 14th century (Kim, 1992, p. 13).

[...] proximity to the centre of Chinese civilization led to a high degree of Chinese political and cultural influence throughout the pre-modern era [...] Over a period of many centuries, the country became imbued – often deeply so – with the values of Chinese philosophy, religion, art, literature and politics, though always, underneath, folkways and the unchanging realities of climate and geography drew Korea along its own individual path. (Buzo, 2007 p. 7)

The most influential period for Confucianism in Korea, known as Neo-Confucianism, was during the Choseon Dynasty (1392-1910).

Confucianism addresses basic relationships, prescribing specific behaviours and outlooks as spelled out in the *Analects of Confucius*. Describing the five basic

⁶ The Romanized name of philosopher/scholar *Kung Fu Tse*

relationships that prescribe a hierarchical order to society, these are: ruler to ruled, father to son, older brother to younger brother, husband to wife and friend to friend. In each relationship, each person is to practice the five essential qualities, known as the Five Cardinal Virtues of integrity, righteousness, loyalty, altruism and goodness and the first person is of a higher rank to the second. Given Confucius' dismay with the state of Chinese government in his day (born in 551 AC), he also emphasized the importance of the position of the civil servant and accords it at a very high rank. Confucianism is based on a set of strict values and places very high importance on filial piety, education and training, the emphasis on the group over the individual, the five basic principles in social relations, and a positive outlook on living (Kim, 1992). Reverence for one's ancestors is imperative and is demonstrated in many different ways including the respect and proper behaviour towards elders and the return to ancestral sites on holidays.

The maintenance of a hierarchical order under Confucianism is paramount. Aside from the five basic relationships there are other factors determining rank – one of high importance is age, placement on the family and in terms of friendships, horizontal ties are also determinants of rank.⁷

This connectedness by family is also extended into other areas. Won-bok Rhie (2002, p. 83) says that Koreans belong to more groups and organizations than any other people. These organizations range from groups of people originating from the same town, to hobby and interest groups and many others. “In order to increase power, they look to

⁷ The importance of the family tree, as a vertical structure, is also reflected in the Korean language. There is a specific proper name for each relative – no two are the same. In English language, the lack of importance to rank is reflected in the fact that there is no distinction between older brother or younger, or to older or younger aunt on the father or mother's side – an aunt is an aunt and a brother is a brother. The Korean use of proper names for every specific position in the family demonstrates the importance of rank – a purely Confucian measure. There is even a unit of measurement (*chon*) that distinguishes the distance between relatives. For example, the distance between husband and wife is zero *chon*, between father or mother and child is one *chon* and so on.

expand their scope of horizontal associations” (Rhie, 2002, p. 77). In this way, horizontal ties are important in friendships and vertical ties are important in kinship ties. The vertical structure determined by family, age, job position or gender determines a hierarchy whereas shared horizontal ties act as a mechanism to close gaps between people within a group and to make friendships and ties closer.

According to the Confucian worldview, there are highly specific life markers that one has to live by, prescribing how and when one is to marry, be educated, raise children and work.

Contrary to Weber’s use of the term *religion* to describe Confucianism, there is and has never been a god associated with Confucius although he did place humans in the cosmic order. Given Korea’s known adherence to Confucian values, as compared with other East Asian countries, this may account for Korea’s comparative wholehearted yet more recent adoption of Christianity, filling in the life-after-death gap that Confucius did not address. Confucianism has traditionally been considered “the dominant system of ultimate values” (Weber 1968, p. xxxvi).

Nationalism: Because a significant portion of this thesis explores the fact that many of Korea’s core values are traditional *and* nationalistic in nature, an introduction to the concept is necessary. Nationalism as a concept is vague and is “notoriously difficult to define” (Anderson, 1983, p. 3). Likewise, “the plethora of phenomena which may be subsumed under the term ‘nationalism’ suggests that it is one of the most ambiguous concepts in the present-day vocabulary of political and analytical thought” (Alter, 1985, p. 4). While one can see in the way nationalism is expressed by a group or individual that it is often emotionally-charged, it can be both cohesive or divisive.

Benedict Anderson defines nationalism as an “imagined political community” (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). It is imagined in the sense that each member of the nation imagines the other to be a member of the same, and of having the same sense of national belonging – in this way it is also limited. This view is echoed by Peter Alter: “Nationalism does not exist as such, but a multitude of manifestations of nationalism do. In other words it is more appropriate to speak of nationalisms in the plural...” (Alter, 1985, p. 5).

In addition to the above, one can also say that nationalism is a “cultural artefact” (ibid, p. 4) in that nationalism – or the nation - is born out of a collective experiences, both remembered and forgotten: “*Or l’essence d’une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses*” (Ernest Renan as cited in Anderson, 1983, p. 6). Alter states that only with concrete historical reference can one know what it signifies (Alter, 1985, p. 5). This also implies that it means different things to different people, and leads one to the fact that it is culturally specific.

All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives. [...] Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, *identity*...which, because it can not be ‘remembered,’ must be narrated. [...] These narratives...are set in homogeneous, empty time. Hence their frame is historical and their setting sociological. (Anderson, 1983, p. 204)

Like all nations, Korea has its own national narrative. Koreans are united by common experience formed both by a history of contact with neighbouring nations and the maintenance of a unique culture and identity that is defined by ethnicity, language and values.

Koreans have maintained this multifaceted identity as a people throughout their extensive history. As a result, they have never felt the

need to distinguish between people and nation. This notion of people and nation as an inseparable unity does not exist in neighbouring nations such as China and Japan, and of course is rarely seen in the West. To this extent Korea's traditional character is truly unique. (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003, p. 424)

Korea's strong national identity is frequently cited as being born of its history – in particular the turbulent times – and is expressed in part by the maintenance of its homogeneous and distinct character (Pai & Tangherlini, 1998, Rhie, 2002, Shin, 1990, KOIS, 2003). As expressed above by Anderson, the Korean narrative is selective in its areas of focus.

In reading or discussing Korean nationalism, one is also inevitably exposed to a discussion on Korea's history of invasion, in particular Japanese colonial rule (1910 – 1945) whereby Korean traditions, way of life and national identity were weakened, if not destroyed, for a period of thirty-five years. During this time, many valued cultural traits, which were not also shared by the Japanese, were actively oppressed. The first decade of colonial rule by the Japanese, from 1910-1919, known as the “Dark Period”, was accentuated by the “comprehensive repression of political and cultural life in the colony” (Eckert, Lee, Lew, Robinson & Wagner, 1990, p. 260). A blackout of Korean press, plunder of Korean art and artefacts (Pai & Tangherlini, 1998, p. 5) and the foundation of an education system, that while provided education for the masses, “was designed to train a literate labor force for future economic development and to educate Koreans to Japanese customs, culture and language” (Eckert et al., 1990, p. 262).

While direct colonial rule entailed all of these negative things and more, the Japanese also provided infrastructure, educational framework and industry, essentially laying out the groundwork for a future independent Korea. Roger Janelli (1993) states that a consequence of this is that many business practices resemble more closely to

Japanese practices than indigenous Korean ones. This statement too is controversial in that the Korean government has actively sought, with much support, to rid the country of these “survivals”.⁸ However, it is worth noting that although some traits may be traced to Japanese roots, Japan too, is a Confucian-influenced country, thus perhaps blurring some of the origins of some practices.

While some scholars (Janelli, 1993, Pai & Tangherlini, 1998) have attempted to address Japan’s constructive role in Korea’s development, the continued focus on the negative aspects of colonial oppression and the anti-Japanese bias remain a large part of Korea’s national narrative.

The continuance of a perceived threat to Korean culture and nation, and the pride for its continued preservation is a force that has culminated in today’s strong nationalistic expression of Korea as a distinct society (Rhie, 2002, p. 22). Rhie states national guardianship is common to peninsular societies because they are particularly vulnerable to outside aggression because of their strategic geographical position (ibid, p. 44, 45).

Values: In discussing values and the ways in which they change, one must first discuss exactly what a value is and how it relates to a society or value system. They are examined in this thesis because core values within a society provide insight as to whether an ethical system is compatible with a country’s economic state. What are values, why do we have them and where do they come from?

In the early 1970s Milton Rokeach conducted a value survey that was oriented towards American society and was discussed in terms of social class and race. Rokeach

⁸ One of these “survivals” is exemplified by the fact that pedestrians pass each other on the left. Under Japanese rule, cars drove on the left and pedestrian habits followed. Today, cars now drive on the right but the pedestrian passing habit has remained on the left – for now.

views values as being closely related to beliefs, either entailing religion or not. His definition follows:

A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5)

His definition of *value system* is “an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (ibid, p. 5). He assumes five things about values: 1) that the total number of values that a person possesses is rather small, 2) that people everywhere possess the same values in different degrees, 3) that values are organized into value systems, 4) that antecedents of values can be traced to culture, society, its institutions and personality, and 5) that human values are manifested in practically all phenomena that that social scientists might find worth investigating (ibid, p. 3).

Rokeach also states that values may come into competition with one another given certain situations. For example, is honesty or success more important? We see this conflict in values as variable in our own society but is also dependent on the individual. He resolves this type of conflict by saying that with maturity a person learns to heirarchize their values thus resolving these types of conflicts. A value, like all beliefs, have “cognitive, affective and behavioural components” (ibid, p. 7). This means that values reveal and shape personal or social preferences of people, they have an emotional impact and also lead people to action or refer to a mode of conduct. Ester, Braun & Mohler (2006) say that values “shape and justify behaviour” (p. 7), they can also be seen as “deeply rooted motivations [...] acquired in early stages of life which guide and/or explain attitudes, norms, and opinions which, in turn, control human action” (ibid, p. 7).

So what function do values serve? In contradiction to Rokeach's statement that all people basically possess the same values, it is also accepted that different cultures have different values, and that enduring values are culturally specific and are shaped by, among other things, historical facts, the personal or collective experience, and by the condition of the society, economically or politically, at a given time. Rokeach states that values are ways of giving expression to human needs, but essentially they provide a moral guide to life and living while providing structure and a comprehensive system to also guide the group.

In line with the idea that values are culturally specific, they provide a sense of belonging and also help the group to cope and relate together. Individual values vary as one can see in the interviews, but some vary only a little bit – thus providing a cohesive code for people to follow. Even those who do not agree with certain prevalent values within their own society – individuals that are less conformist, say - will nonetheless have the knowledge and understanding of where others are coming from and will be able to base decisions on the same value-based knowledge.

When we hear about someone with “solid” values in our society it will likely mean something different to someone from a different cultural background. However, there may be some fundamental similarities. For example, a family-oriented person in any society may be seen as a person of upstanding values. On the other hand, an upper middle class person from North America may believe that one's career defines the person and this may differ greatly from a person from say, a small Pacific island where subsistence living is the norm. The importance of particular values is highly variable and may be defined by way of personal or family ties, material possessions, status, work ethic,

physical appearance, skills, number of children, and the list goes on *ad infinitum* . This is to say that values are to a large extent culturally specific. And, within a single society individual values will also vary extent between religions or social class, and especially between different generations or age groups. In this way they do not guarantee social cohesion because they are not uniform even within a single homogeneous society, but they do provide a comprehensive point of reference. Generally, they “shape and justify behaviour” (Ester, Braun & Mohler, 2006, p. 7).

To distinguish between social norms and values, a social norm is simply the prescriptive behaviour within a particular setting or situation. The value encompasses the norm but meaning is also associated with it. For example, to bow in greeting is a social norm in Korea. The belief that it is important to bow in order to show respect is the value.⁹

Tradition: Given the fact that Weber views “traditionalism” to be the root cause hindering the development of capitalism, one must examine what is meant by the term. What does traditionalism mean in Weber’s view and how do others treat the same term?

Those who have examined the concept of tradition include Edward Shils (1981), Max Weber (1968) and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983). The reason it is discussed here is because as Shils defines it as “anything transmitted or handed down from past to present” (Shils, 1981, p. 12), values are also handed down. Values of Confucian origin are often deemed “traditional values”, in this way the tradition and the value are one and the same.

⁹ Although some of the interview questions do not pertain to values *per se*, the concept or term asked about is closely linked to a series of core values. For example, *hahn* is not a value in itself, it is an emotional state caused by the lack of adherence, either by others or by oneself, to traditional values. In this way, it has a strong link to several values including the importance of collective nationalism caused by *hahn*, and the role it plays as a motivator to act in one’s life. More on the definition of *hahn* follows in section III.

How are traditions transmitted and what do they consist of? Also, who decides on the validity of a tradition? Traditions, like values, are indeed most frequently vague, anonymous, often intangible and unaccredited. “The decisive criterion is that having been created through human actions, through thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next” (ibid, p. 12). Traditions include everything and according to Shils, need not be called a tradition in order to be one. This final statement rings true in the Korean case, where progress and modernization are of utmost importance but also where a strong sense of nationalism and the need to distinguish oneself as unique is equally important.

Another problem with the definition of tradition is its intangible nature. Although many traditions are acknowledged and acted out by members of a society or many societies, the tradition itself undergoes changes, whether or not the ‘recipients’ see it as changed (ibid, p. 13).¹⁰ How old does something have to be in order to be a tradition? There is no straight answer; it is different for everything and every case.

Finally, Shils notes that the purpose of tradition, in contrast to Weber’s view of it, is that it provides a sense “filiation with the past”, prior lineage and identity – also important values in Korea. As will be seen later, filiations with the past is of utmost importance in present day Korea.

Shils criticizes the social sciences community of late for treating the notion of tradition as an “intellectual disturbance” (Shils, 1981, p. 8). He argues that tradition’s influence should not be argued away in their increasing belief that “modern society moves toward a state of traditionlessness” (ibid, p. 11). Weber in his day, also implied

¹⁰ For example, here in Canada, elements of Christmas have changed over time but many elements of the holiday remain traditional. Although Christmas has been celebrated since the birth of Christ in one form or another, it was not until the 16th century that fir trees were brought into the house as a traditional element of the holiday.

that societies that were actively involved in the maintenance of traditions were driven by 'irrational fear' – which is tied to his argument as something that hinders 'progress'. Alternatively, those 'letting go' of traditions in favour of change and progress were seen as societies in the process of becoming rational (ibid, p. 10). This attitude seems to have endured to some degree according to Shils. The assumption that there is no place for traditional values in a modern society is highly debatable and also takes for granted that the old and the new are at odds with each other.

Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) developed the theory of the *invented tradition*. This ties in to Shils' argument that traditions are changing even though they are rooted in the past. Essentially, Hobsbawm asserts that people respond to novel situations such as innovation and modernization that "take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 2).¹¹ He describes this invention as a "process of formalization and ritualization" – as seen with many traditions, whether they are invented or not – and refer them to the past in some form.

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 2).

Two of the best known examples of 'invented tradition' include the pageantry surrounding the British monarchy, being a product of the last two centuries only. The other famous example is that of the national identity of the Scots being highly

¹¹ References to Korea's golden age can be found everywhere in modern structures in Korea – not only emphasizing Korea's reverence for this time period, but also indicating that the values associated with this age are still of great importance.

traditionalized and identifiable today yet was only invented in the late seventeenth century.

Hobsbawm, & Ranger assert that the invention of tradition is likely to occur more frequently during periods of rapid change (ibid, p. 4). This makes the incorporation of these theories particularly relevant for this thesis given the speed and enormity of change that Korea has seen in its modern history.

Similarly, Edward Shils shows that while tradition is ever-changing, novelty or change is based on tradition:

All novelty is a modification of what has existed previously; it occurs and reproduces itself as novelty in a more persistent context. Every novel characteristic is determined in part by what existed previously; its previous character is one determinant of what it became when it became something new. The mechanisms of persistence are not utterly distinct from the mechanisms of change. There is persistence in change and around change and the mechanisms of change also call for the operation of the mechanism of persistence; without these, the innovation would fade and the previous condition would be restored. (Shils, 1971, p. 122)

As will be discussed further, there are many invented traditions in today's Korea, and Hobsbawm's theories are highly relevant, but unlike Shils, he does not account for the fact that everything symbolic is humanly created and therefore one could potentially argue that *all* tradition is invented rather than making a distinction as Hobsbawm does between "genuine" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 8) and "invented". One must take some caution in using invented tradition as an explanation for "traditional" aspects of society that are difficult to explain, and acknowledge the power and meaning of the past:

Nothing which happens escapes completely from the grip of the past; some events scarcely escape at all from its grip. Much of what exists is persistence or reproduction of what existed earlier. Entities, events or systems, physiological, psychological, social and cultural, have careers in which at each point the state of the system stands in some determinate relationship to the state of the system at earlier points. (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 122)

Modern: Although Weber refers specifically to the term *capitalism* – it is part and parcel of a larger concept often discussed in terms of *modernization* or *development* which has also been associated with a consumer-driven, western-style, growth and competition-oriented economy. Weber clearly implies that Confucian societies lack these very features.

Like the term *traditional*, *modern* is also relative. Some may feel we live in modern times, but it depends on who one talks to and to what we are referring. For example, a rocket scientist may feel that we are premodern when it come to space exploration and an environmental scientist may feel the same way about human energy consumption. One may think of the soot-infused skies of London during the industrial revolution as underdeveloped, but of course, back then, the soot was an indication of major “progress”.

Levy defines modern society as a place where “members use inanimate sources of energy and/or use tools to multiply the effects of their efforts” (as cited in Kim, 1992, p 17). Some see it in terms of Westernization. Other may see it as the changes associated with technology. While still others, including Inglehart & Baker, (2000, 2001) and Daniel Bell (2003), may not use the term at all any more as it is too closely associated with now rejected modernization theories, or because they feel that the “modernization” era of the world has now shifted, in part because of the globalization process and with time, into a *post-industrial*, or *post-materialist* one.

Complicating matters, some very relevant theories on values and value change are associated with one of a variety of these terms. In their efforts to reconcile some ongoing

problems in the definition and use of concepts that are either outmoded, redefined or newly coined to adjust for new circumstances, one can get lost in the terminology. Max Weber in his day speaks of capitalist societies, Ronald Inglehart speaks of pre & post-materialist societies, while others speak of industrialized, modernized or postmodernized.

As a final note to this section on concepts, there is a connectivity found in the discussions of tradition, values and nation in that they have all been defined as invented (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) or imagined (Anderson, 1983). If tradition is invented and Confucianism and nationalism are a part of tradition, then there is much to uncover in the way that tradition is formed.

Confucianism and Capitalism – the arguments

This section outlines in further detail the arguments that Max Weber makes regarding the relationship between Confucianism and capitalism in *The Religion of China* (1968) and introduces some alternative perspectives that are also explored in this thesis.

Although Weber's book is primarily focused on China – here it is applied to Korea given the country's known adherence to Confucianism and its relative social, political and geographic position.

Given the deep-rooted history of isolation coupled with the basic tenets of the Confucianism, this thesis asks how Korea came to strike a balance between traditionalism, orthodoxy and the demands of industrialization and globalization. These are questions that others have tried to answer, each with differing opinions regarding the role that Confucianism has played in the East Asian adaptation. Much of the debate on this subject

can be credited to Max Weber's argument that Confucian societies are incapable of economic success.

Weber is concerned with the religious ethical system as an influence on socioeconomic development. Coming from an era of great expansion in the Western world, he saw a connection between the rise of capitalism and the Protestant ethic. Seeing that both were emerging as dominant forces in his society, he entertained the idea that certain religious outlooks provided motivation towards "progress" while others hindered it (Weber, 1968). Taking Confucianism and Taoism to substantiate his argument about the Protestant ethic, the volume *The Religion of China* was written.

Weber states that Confucianism stifled innovation and change within a society because people were preoccupied with duties that fall within their submissive responsibility, therefore quelling any talents or enterprisal motivations that could potentially lead to industrialization. He viewed the European Protestant ethical system, in contrast, as one that rewarded innovation and concluded that Confucian societies were not able to succeed as capitalist societies.

Weber argued that there were certain conditions that favoured the development of capitalist economies. Those include long periods of peace, a growing population, the freedom to choose one's occupation and the ability to purchase land. He states that the constant attention given to raising and maintaining one's status is counterproductive to economic development.

Some of the particular aspects of the Protestant ethic that he found to be complementary to the "spirit of capitalism" are: 1) any reward earned from hard work are God's gifts and should not be refused – thus viewing high earnings as a positive thing; 2)

the discouragement of indulging “in things of the flesh” thus encouraging the saving of earnings; and 3) the fostering of individualism.

Although Weber finds that there are some elements of Confucian societies that are compatible with the development of capitalism, in his view, the ones that he deems to be counterproductive to it have more weight. Some of the elements that he sees as conducive to the development of capitalism include the maintenance of unity and peace by the Chinese imperial power structure. However, he also found this to be a negative given the nature centralized power. Other factors he saw as favourable were the freedom of mobility and choice of occupation.

In terms of the negative aspects of Confucianism, Weber divides the categories into structural, such as government and law, and ideological ones, which are more of a concern for the purposes of this research given its focus on traditional values.

Of the structural negatives, the following were viewed by Weber as detrimental to the development of capitalism: 1) The emphasis on social order by a power-centered government as an impediment to any “radical innovations”, 2) The kinship structure as being overly devoted to the support and education of the eldest male in that it discourages individualism and independence, and 3) the dominance of ethical codes over a formalized legal system.

Although these factors were deemed detrimental to the development of capitalism by Weber, he conceded that because there were both favourable and unfavourable elements in the structural features of Confucian societies, they could not be *deciding* factors in the achievement of capitalism.

In terms of ideological influences, Weber focuses on the literati ruling class as the benchmark example for Confucian values. The literati or scholar (*seonbi*) as they are known, represent the “gentleman ideal” and a logical choice for Weber’s ideal type, in their pursuit to achieve the ideal Confucian life and because of their strong connection to the traditional.

The feature that Weber finds most adversely affects the development of capitalism is Confucian traditionalism. More specifically, he deemed the following as detrimental in Confucian societies: 1) the view of the world as a given, whereby a person’s role is to accept and adjust to one’s circumstances and changes in the environment. This is in opposition to the Western view of the world that perceives the world as something to control or master, 2) the rejection by the gentleman ideal of specialization in one given work or knowledge domain. Similar in idea to the European “Renaissance Man”, the Confucian literati saw professional specialization as debasing. This is in opposition to the Protestant view whereby specialization is seen as a tool that can help one compete and manipulate one’s world.

Stated in the introduction to the *Religion of China* (1968), C.K. Yang explains how Weber’s main argument for the failure of Confucian societies in developing capitalism revolves around the central perspective of a person’s place in the universe:

Man’s duty lay in pious conformity to the requirements of cosmic and social harmony as set by tradition, and in the cultivation of a “harmoniously balanced personality” which would represent a microcosm. A watchful self-control should be exercised to reduce tension and to repress the irrational passions aroused in ecstatic and orgiastic acts which might destroy harmony and poise. This would bring long life, health, wealth and a good name after death, the ultimate objectives for the Confucian this-worldly struggle, in Weber’s analysis. [...]

And because the Puritan could “live *in* the world and yet not be *of* it,” he could develop rational aptitudes for remolding the world. But the Confucian lived *in* the world as a well adjusted part *of* it, so his objectivity

and rationality were severely restricted by the tyrannical influence of traditionalism. (Weber, 1968, p. xxx)

Weber wrote his volume in 1916, four years before his death and far before the world had a chance to see how East Asia would change in the latter half of the 20th century – and he would certainly give others reason to argue that Confucian societies were fully capable of industrialisation.

With the help of two relevant ethnographies, this thesis examines other arguments that may help explain resolve the paradox of Korean success. In terms of Confucian values and capitalism, an ethnography of the Korean conglomerate business known as *chaebol*, by Roger Janelli (1993) provides an important contribution to the Confucianism/capitalism discussion of this thesis. Briefly, this work argues against Weber's view in that it first takes Confucianism and "tradition" as invented or reinvented phenomena that while make their way into the capitalist structure, are not in and of themselves "old" values. Nor does he argue that Korea has done away with the influences of its past. Unlike Weber who finds that the basic values of Confucianism incompatible with capitalism, Janelli argues that capitalism is in itself a cultural construction, "conditioned both by local circumstances (including pre-existing cultural dispositions) and by the position of a culture/society/polity/economy in the global political economy" (Bestor, 1999, p. 241).

The second ethnography by Choong Soon Kim examines a copper industry company whereby Confucian practices and values are present and compatible within the structure of the company. Although Kim's argument is compatible with Janelli's, it maintains a traditionalist bias and does not formulate an in-depth explanation as to the nature of the relationships between the traditional and modern or Confucian and capitalist.

Is Confucianism a relevant force or a dying philosophy?

Since East Asian societies have developed and prospered in a way that Weber could not predict, debates surrounding his primary question continue to this day. Are Asian values becoming “Western”? Is Confucianism dying? Weber’s argument remains the fulcrum to which the debate is tethered.

At the turn of our century, *Korea Journal* has been a lively forum for several rounds of debate over issues surrounding Asian values.

In fact, the success of the countries in this region became so conspicuous as to require some explanation. The need for a new theoretical framework became all the more acute primarily because the social scientists, both liberal and Marxist, failed to predict or explain the economic success of these “Confucian” states while the Weberian thesis regarding the alleged incompatibility between Confucianism and capitalism rapidly lost credibility. (Bell & Chaibong, 2003, p. 2)

There have also been a series of conferences held on Korean sites where issues of the role of Confucianism in East Asia, resulted in the edited volume, *Confucianism in the Modern World* (Bell & Chaibong, 2003). Participants argued over several issues affecting Asian values including democratic, legal and capitalistic ones.

At the core of the discussion are the seeming incompatible elements of Confucianism and modernity:

The Confucian emphasis on differentiated and hierarchical relationships as manifested in the Five Cardinal Virtues leads inevitably to elitism and authoritarianism. The Confucian dictum that one should pursue justice, not profit, conflicts with the commercial ethos that undergirds capitalism and the ethics of self-interest that drives it. (Bell & Chaibong, 2003 p. 3)

As discussed earlier, there are several value categories in Korean society that seem to present paradoxes or seem incompatible with commonly-held post-industrial values. Where some of these areas may indeed present true incompatibility, others, such as with the core values of competition, *hahn*, extremism, orthodoxy and others mentioned in this thesis, these are reconciled by a closer examination of each value.

One of the central arguments today in this debate is how relevant is a discussion of values when examining East Asia's globalizing transition. The assumption is that globalization is directly related to value change that mimics the West. This issue is questioned by Kim Hyuk-Rae:

In other words, the debate is directly related to the question of how much Western values have globalized or are capable of being globalized and as a global standard through the axes of space and time, and the question of how much Asian values can be globalized from a comparative perspective. (Kim, 2002, p. 220)

Gilbert Rozman explains that Confucianism is commonly believed to be in its death throes, but argues that Confucianism in the long-term may hold value in its legacy in the context of a changing global environment. He also reminds us that conscious revitalization of the tenets of traditional values are often later seen in societies where dramatic changes have occurred (Rozman, 2002). To a further degree, this is also argued by Daniel Bell in *China's New Confucianism* (2008), who argues that Confucianism is seeing a revival in both everyday China and on the political scene. In politics, Bell shows that the old Communist ideological rhetoric no longer fits the "New China" and suggests that a Confucian-based state ideology could be the answer.

While one side of the debate argues that Asian values are a direct force for rapid economic development, others pinpoint them as being the primary cause for Asia's comparative delay (Lee, 2005). After World War II, East Asia did so well that discussion was needed to help explain the situation with regard to the region's conspicuous ethical system and current great success (Bell & Chaibong, 2003). According to Bell and Chaibong, it was initially Western scholars who attributed the East Asian economic miracle to a Confucian value system, while East Asian scholars felt that the success had to do with *overcoming* the constraints of Confucianism (Bell & Chaibong 2003, p. 2).

However, according to Daniel Bell, the first people to associate economic success with Confucianism were politicians who publicly recognized, in nationalistic terms, that “Asian values” were the reason for such success. This argument, in its political guise, was used to place constraints on democratic processes (ibid, p. 3). The prime example of this is the rebuilding and economic reorientation of Korea following the Korean War under the dictatorship of Park Chung Hee in the 1960s and 70s. The authoritarian military rule, commanding the lower ranks as a nationalistic call to action for were meant to justify the brutality and suppression of personal freedoms in the name of rebuilding the country. Playing on the Confucian structure of relationships, Hee ruled with a strong authoritative fist, citing Confucian virtues of dedication, loyalty and self-sacrifice. Ironically, Hee’s assassination in 1979, was by the Director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency who also acted in the name of nationalism. The result was two sides acting in the name of nationalism, each with their own agenda, both using Confucian rhetoric as a political tool.

To add to the debate, Confucian values were later *blamed* as being a cause for the lack of continued growth after the 1997 financial crisis. “After the Asian financial crisis, defenders of Confucianism are barely visible” (Rozman, 2002, p. 11). There was never any fundamentalist rejection to Confucianism in East Asia as there were never, in modern times, any fundamentalists. Bell notes that it is perhaps this very lack of fundamentalist resistance that allowed East Asia to develop and democratize.

Bell describes a group of intellectuals that highlight the humanistic elements of Confucianism while also recognizing its flaws. These scholars, while descriptive in nature, say that Confucianism is valuable in social spheres because it “expresses values of

universal significance for those concerned with leading moral lives” (Tu, 1984, p. 4). Tu distinguishes between two types of Confucianism and relates these to their role in economic development in Korea:

Politicized Confucianism is the power of the state over society; politics over economics; and bureaucratization over individual initiative. This type of Confucianism, as a political ideology, needs to be thoroughly critiqued before a country can be made dynamic. The other is the Confucian personal ethic which values self-discipline, going beyond egoism to become actively involved in the collective good, education, personal involvement, the work ethic and communal effort. (Tu, 1984 – cited in Kim, 1992, p. 14)

Tu makes the significant distinction between the ethical and political and believes that it is not necessarily the politicized version that is most functional for economic success, but the ethical version, which is again contrary to Weber’s theory on Confucianism. Gilbert Rozman asserts a similar viewpoint:

Many have tried to answer the question of what we mean by this concept that seems to be a cross between religion, way of life, system of belief about society, and state ideology. In order to analyze its survival we must side with those who find it embedded in social structure and individual attitudes as well as in an embracing state-backed intellectual office. (Rozman, 2002, p. 13)

On a more focused level, Kim (1992) asserts that regardless of criticism, “Confucian values have been and are still to a great extent pervasive in Korean industrial relations...” (Kim, 1992, p. 15). Kim’s ethnography on the culture of Korean industry clearly reflects this. “Examples include a system of male dominance, a paternalistic reward structure with extra fringe benefits [...] and formal authoritarian relations” (ibid, p. 15). One can not deny the influence of Confucian values are present both in the political and social sphere. It is, however, important to make the distinction that its influence is not overt, it underlies daily decisions, manners and custom – it accounts for culture.

The fact that Weber's theories show both strength and weakness, depending on one's perspective, is what keeps this debate alive. It also suggests that the perception that modern and traditional as opposing concepts is disadvantageous to the argument.

Theories of value change

This section explores and presents some alternate theories on value change in order to view the Korean case from other perspectives than that presented by Max Weber. It is also done in order to position oneself with regard to the research results of this thesis.

Milton Rokeach (1973) recognized the fact that values are enduring and changing at the same time. In his study of value change, he examines the issue from a social psychological standpoint. He states that "changes within the total belief system [...] (requires) the presence of some state of imbalance within the system" (p. 217). Although his discussion focuses on individual value change rather than changes in value systems, his work offers some valuable insight nonetheless.

One can break down the general perspectives on value change into three different categories: the postmodernist, the particularist and the dimensionalist. The postmodernists view cultural values as fluid, incoherent and changing. They are not restricted by change, space, tradition or structure. The particularist views values as structured but focuses on sub-types of values such as religious or political (Ester et al., 2006, p. 11). The main interest among the particularists is not the overall greater structure. They examine particular instances of observable change within a particular domain. Finally, the dimensionalist examines values as a whole, or on a macro level:

The dimensionalist analyst of contemporary culture is explicitly interested in the systemic whole of values that overrides specific values in specific domains. (Ester et al. 2006, p. 11)

Of the dimensionalist school, a prevailing theory of value change developed by Ronald Inglehart, combines theories of scarcity and socialization. Inglehart's perspective is appropriate for this study as he is one of the leaders in the study of value change in general and has also written extensively on the connection between value change and modernization.¹³ Another appealing aspect to his work is that it does not remain rigid or predictive – he consistently re-examines his theories when new data is presented.

Inglehart put forth some interdependent value shift hypotheses. One is based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs or *scarcity* hypothesis (Maslow, 1945) whereby a person's priorities are a reflection of one's socioeconomic environment. This is where needs are prioritized placing physiological needs at the top of the scale (those that are related to survival) with social, intellectual, or aesthetic ones further down the ladder. It follows that values will be focused around that which is scarce. Once one need is satisfied, the next will be addressed and related values will change accordingly. At the basic needs level the theory is clear and logical; however, Maslow's hierarchy of needs at the non-physical level is less reliable in terms of ranking – suggesting a problem with hierarchizing intellectual and aesthetic needs. This theory, although dated, is useful to a certain degree in that it may help identify priorities within a society when the society is concerned with physical needs. Although Korean economy and most members of society are well-beyond satisfying physical needs, this theory proves useful in the analysis of Korean values nonetheless by highlighting the fact that needs can be perceived or real within the scale. It is later shown that values related to physical needs may be important given other cultural or historical factors that influence the perception of needs, even if

¹³ A.K.A. 'postmaterialism' in Inglehart's language.

they are in all forms satisfied. By way of its faulty structure, Maslow's theory in the end provides some insight to how Korea's values are heirarchized.

Inglehart's *socialization* hypothesis makes use of Maslow's basic theory yet includes a generational factor to the above whereby the socialization process and socio-economic environment of one's youth have a lasting effect. Meaning, one's values do not change immediately upon a change in one's socioeconomic environment – "there is a substantial time lag" (Inglehart, 1990, p. 68).

Inglehart and colleagues Wayne E. Baker and Paul R. Abramson, have now taken on a less polarized view of these issues by providing empirical data that suggest that *both* pervasive change takes place when economic change is present and that cultural traditions and values persist within the same economic environment.

Inglehart uses the terms *pre* and *post-materialist* and later modifies his perspective to include the term *modern* in moving away from a more cognitive/behavioural line of thinking. He further states that the scarcity hypothesis is not enough to make adequate predictions about value change and that it must be used in connection with his socialization hypothesis. Taking into consideration the accepted idea that the majority of development, formation and change takes place during one's early years, he states that change is not sudden, as Maslow's simple scarcity hypothesis implies, and takes place slowly when a younger generation replaces an older one.

These theories suggest, given the sharp rise in socioeconomic conditions in Korea over the past forty years or so, that values are in the process of shifting from prematerialist (needs/survival based – in Inglehart's language, or traditionalist in

Webers') values to postmaterialist or capitalistic (social, intellectual, etc.) values at a slow rate, with a noticeable generational gap.¹⁴

Inglehart also believes that “attitudinal continuities play an important role at both the individual and the cultural level.” (ibid, p. 105) This is where cultural and historical influences come into play. As stated earlier, it is important to consider the cultural history of a nation when dealing with value change. As will be shown, historical events and in this case by association, nationalism, are significant factors in the “attitude” of Korean expression of values.

The relationship between value change and modernization

There are several classic interpretation and prediction models other than Weber's that relate to the issue of value change with regard to modernization. Many early discussions focus on religious beliefs, rather than values in general. Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud all predicted that religion would become less important in industrializing societies. Weber viewed Confucianism as a religion and concluded that its tenets were directly counterproductive to industrialization and therefore we would see either the demise of Confucian values in Asian societies or a lack of industrialization in same societies. The issue becomes further divided and complex given the terminology of the discussion. While some discussed values in terms of religion, others have held similar discussions in terms of cultural change, social change, cultural identity and tradition. Even though terminology and definitions may be vast, each author brings something new to the forum

¹⁴ This was shown to be true in surveys conducted in Germany in 1949 that showed that the primary priority was to be “free from want” – reflective of the needs scale in a prematerialist society. After some very fast economic growth in the country, by 1958, “freedom of speech” was deemed most important when provided with the same choices – clearly a postmaterialist value (Inglehart, 1990).

and can be relevant in a discussion of value change as each term used has similar and overlapping implications.

There are two major schools of thought on the issue of value change and modernization: the first “predicts the decline of traditional values and their replacement with ‘modern’ values”. That as increasing value exchanges occur, core values will become less nation specific and national identity will become more and more a global identity. This is known as *convergence theory* (Ester et al., 2006). The second “emphasizes the persistence of traditional values despite economic and political changes” (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, p. 20). This second theory holds that globalization will actually lead to the rediscovery or retention of cultural and traditional values – known as *divergence theory*. This means that as national borders become more and more fluid, traditional values will become more and more tenacious as an act of protectionism and the fear of losing one’s cultural identity. This leaves one with two rather opposing views to deal with.

While it has generally been accepted that the process of industrialization goes hand in hand with a certain amount of pervasive social change, there are others who have found that traditional values do not necessarily diminish with modernization, and there are also advocates that say that modernization does not necessarily follow a linear path – that there are “multiple modernities”. This is a more recent take on the issue that was in part developed by S.N. Eisenstadt and Charles Taylor to help explain why different parts of the world modernized in ways that do not conform to the Western model of modernization – East Asia included.

Knowing that the issue of values and economic change is far more complex than any deterministic model can offer, there is a current need for some alternative suggestions.

A controversial and now famous “Clash of Civilizations” thesis put forth by S.P. Huntington (1996) suggests that culture matters greatly in the preservation of values. Along similar lines, Inglehart & Baker (2003), Janelli (1993) and Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) agree that culture and religion matters: “Religious legacies leave a distinct and lasting imprint on contemporary values” (Inglehart & Baker, 2003, p. 7).

There is now less discussion on this subject now that the old modernization prediction models have been deemed as too simplistic. Perhaps with the declaration of modernization theory being dead, there has been a lack of discussion on value change within a “modern” context.

Via the World Values Survey which was carried out in three time periods and covered 65 countries, when Inglehart and Baker conclude that while modernization in the form of known processes of industrialization and post-industrialization leads to a general shift towards values that are increasingly rational, tolerant, trusting and participatory, the influence of traditional value systems “exhibit remarkable durability and resilience. Empirical evidence from 65 societies indicates that values can and do change, but also that they continue to reflect a society’s cultural heritage” (Inglehart and Baker, 2000, p. 40). Together, they find evidence “of both massive cultural change and the persistence of distinctive cultural traditions” (ibid, p. 19).

What we witness with the development of a global economy is not increasing uniformity, in the form of a universalization of western culture, but rather the continuation of civilizational diversity through the active reinvention and reincorporation on non-western civilizational patterns [...]. But values seem to be path dependent: a history of protestant or

orthodox or Islamic or Confucian tradition gives rise to cultural zones with distinctive value systems that persist after controlling for the effects of economic development. Economic development tends to push societies in a common direction, but rather than converging, they seem to move on parallel trajectories shaped by their cultural heritage. (ibid, p. 22)

Inglehart and Baker assert that the broad cultural heritage of a country leaves an imprint in the form of persistent values. The survey uses several “cultural zones” first delineated by S.P. Huntington (Huntington, 1993, 1996): Protestant, ex-Communist, Confucian, Catholic, Latin, Orthodox, Islamic and English-speaking to demonstrate the difference in values of these zones in the face of economic change. They are an aid in identifying certain tendencies in value change within these zones but it is also conceded that the reality is complex, that zones overlap, and that persistent values are not necessarily predictable. This also leads us away from the model classification system that allows only for the industrialized / post industrialized dimensions.

In summary, there are several perspectives to consider for the purposes of this thesis in conjunction with Weber’s argument outlined earlier.

Regarding value change the following, in sum, has been considered:

- 1- That values are enduring and changing at the same time;
- 2- That one’s priorities may be based on one’s socioeconomic situation and may be predictable to a certain degree;
- 3- That one’s core values are generally established during one’s youth and that they may change slowly over time resulting in a generation gap;
- 4- That culture and history, including religion, may play an important role in the tenacity or lack thereof of core values.

In terms of modernization and value change, we consider:

- 1- That religious beliefs are not compatible with industrialization;
- 2- That traditional values are replaced with modern values (convergence);
- 3- That traditional values persist despite major economic and political change, in resistance to perceived threat of cultural homogenization (divergence);
- 4- That religion leaves a lasting imprint on contemporary values;
- 5- That *both* pervasive value change *and* the persistence of traditional values occur at the same time – and are shaped by one’s cultural and religious heritage.

In light of the above, we are faced with a number of alternative views. In order to address Weber’s perspective, the next chapters will address the Korean value system as it is today and assess the state of traditional values there. This will then lead to some solid conclusions regarding the issue of value change and create a space to address Weber’s theories.

III. CONFUCIANISM AND KOREAN VALUES

This section examines some of Korea’s core values to illuminate 1) in what ways they are manifested in society and how they may or may not be traditional in nature and; 2) their importance in Korean society today. Based on literature review, this section begins to assess the situation in preparation for comparison and analysis in light of Weber’s theory and the others presented in the previous section.

What is traditionalism in Korea?

At the core of his argument, Weber focuses on the idea that traditionalism – or the generalized focus of life on what is deemed as traditional – is primarily responsible for Confucian societies being unable to develop into capitalistic societies. He argues that this focus prevents society from innovation and competition. Weber’s perspective needs examination within the Korean context –because it is popularly held that it adheres to traditional values, and “traditionalism” is in itself, something that is valued. However, one must examine what traditionalism means in Korea and whether or not it adheres to Weber’s definition. This section outlines some of Korea’s core values and relates them both to traditional Confucian values and nationalism by way of the invention of tradition.

In Korea, you may be told that innumerable familiar items and activities are traditional; anything ranging from an orange grown on Jeju Island to a Hyundai car may be deemed as “traditional”. The term is thrown about a great deal in Korea.¹⁵ One thing that is evident is that *tradition*, in whatever sense it is used, is of importance.

In terms of the notion of tradition in Korea, one refers back to Hobsbawm’s invention of tradition. Korea is an exceptional place to examine this phenomenon especially given Hobsbawm & Ranger’s assertion that we should expect societies to invent traditions more frequently “when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983 p. 4).

Korea’s historical background contributes to the value system as it is connected to the country’s growth is the starting point to the elaboration of the concept of *Koreanness*.

¹⁵ The word is so prolific, even some school children were overheard referring to MacDonald’s as the “traditional food of America”.

This term is here being used to demonstrate Korea's expression as a distinct society as it relates to political economy and traditional values. *Koreanness* is expressed by way of reference to the traditional by way of norms and values stemming from Confucian philosophy and the nationalistic reactions against oppression and control. It can be interpreted as a reaction against colonialism –that also incorporates unique elements of Korean culture and those that have contributed to her economic prosperity. Some of these values, including nationalism, orthodoxy, *choong* and equality are discussed in the next two sections, and while they are “traditional” in that they are referred to the past and they are deemed as traditional, they are not necessarily purely of Confucian origin. They, like traditions, are invented, are fluid creations of their past, and are changing.

Although Korea is traditionally focused – this does not necessarily mean that every aspect of traditionalism is rooted in the distant past, nor does it mean that “newness” is rejected. In this case, traditionalism in its various manifestations is highly relevant, yet can be rooted in *both* the past and the present and manifests itself as *Koreanness*.

Influence of Confucianism in Korea today

In order to gauge the presence of Confucian values in Korea today, an examination of its current status is required. This section examines the core values of Korea and in what way they are related to traditional Confucian values.

As this section makes a connection between today's core values and a Confucian ethical system, we must begin by assuming that Confucianism is an influence on present day Korea, but not the only influence. Although the connection can be made in some

instances quite easily, the historical and social background and makeup of the country is comprised of too many facets to quantify. It is accepted that “the function of Confucianism and its impact on the Korean way of life, including rules for industrial relations, needs to be re-examined” (Kim, 1992, p. 5). The following examination of particular values shows how this is so and provides the basis for a re-examination.

Incorporating the core values of Korea: Orthodoxy, equality, *hahn and choong*.

In consideration of the contradiction between Inglehart’s argument that values are far more persistent than previously believed, and Weber’s argument that predicts the demise of traditional values in the face of industrialization, this section seeks to place a microscope over the core values of Korea in order to begin to show how Korean values are important elements to Korea’s capitalistic success and traditional focus, and also to position oneself alongside Weber’s perspective.

Here, one also begins to form a comprehensive definition of *Koreanness* and its inextricable elements that combine traditional values, modern values and nationalism. A related concept to *Koreanness*, *Confucian capitalism* has been used to denote the economic miracle of the Little Dragons (Goodell, 1995). In a similar way, however, *Confucian capitalism* is a broad term that encompasses a cultural explanation for the economic success of all the small East Asian countries, and does not take into account the particularities of each culture. Another term that has been used is *Korean capitalism* (Janelli, 1993), yet a reading of this concept can imply an imperfect capitalism and while it encompasses cultural factors, its bent is more economic. The term *Koreanness* includes the capitalistic society that is in place today and encompasses the core value system in one.

The idea behind *Koreanness* is that it has an essential historical connection, but it is also rooted in the idea that Korea is its own unique place and people that have not only adopted and maintained specific values but who have also adapted in ways that have propelled the country economically and otherwise. Like *Confucian capitalism*, *Koreanness* encompasses the fact that a culture rooted in Confucianism has been economically successful, but includes cultural elements and values that distinguish Korea from other countries.

Some values seem to be more visible or prominent despite great changes such as a widened generational gap, greater roles for women, democratization and a strong position in the globalized economy. On the other hand, we also see evidence of more “modern” values in everyday life, such as an increased emphasis on leisure time, a greater role for women in the workplace, the general demand for fair business practices, and an increased focus on “wellbeing” and quality of life over meeting basic needs for survival.

Keeping in mind that values are not solely influenced by ethical principles and / or religion, the core values described here are generally intertwined with Confucianism and are also the result of Korea’s particular cultural history. Some values seem to be more closely linked with a historical past such as with *nationalism* and *extremism*, where others such as faithfulness, equality and sharing can be more easily traced to the Confucian ethos. Still others can be categorized in both areas – for example, orthodoxy can be seen as a reaction against an occupied past, but it can also be linked to the concept of *choong*, an important concept in Confucian studies, is the preservation of orthodox (original) values of fairness and righteousness unfettered by private interests, and harmony and the agreement of what is right and wrong (Rhie, 2002, p. 45).

These concepts and values, are applied in many ways to modern situations and environments, sometimes appearing to work very well, other times resulting in seeming paradoxes present in everyday situations. They are not a pure survival of the Choseon Dynasty by any means. This complexity and distinctness is what creates the need for a concept such as *Koreanness*.

Orthodoxy: It is argued that Korea's most important values in the broadest sense are *orthodoxy* or *originality*, the observance and value of all that is unique and *distinct* from others (Rhie, 2002, p. 21). An integrated discussion of nationalism is also important here given that these values have been described by Won-bok Rhie (2002) as the foundation of the nation. As peninsular people and with the collective social imaginary stemming from invasion, colonialism and a turbulent past, Koreans express themselves in highly nationalistic or protectionist ways.

Nationalism is not simply a product of political economy, the rise of nationalism in Korea can be traced to multiple things including foreign domination, war, industrialisation and technology, to name a few. As this thesis also argues that primary values are also informed by national sentiments, it follows that nationalism is intimately linked to culture and society:

Many of these theorists [...] are reluctant to recognize that both economic and power relations are in turn embedded in contingent and subjective social and cultural conditions or that political economies are culturally informed and socially constructed through shared understanding and tacit agreement. (Janelli, 1993, p. 75)

As will be illustrated, nationalism and orthodoxy are expressed in different ways. For example, the movement of cultural nationalists in the 1920s advocated the strengthening of the country by way of growth and indigenous development in the form of industrialization and the promotion of local goods. This is still seen

today in Korean consumer habits and is exemplified by the recent protests against the importation of American beef.

Although nationalism has been “official” in many ways, it is also expressed as an important value in itself and is often echoed in tandem with other values, such is the case of *orthodoxy*.

Stemming from a turbulent past, preserving a distinct Korean identity means highlighting that which is original to the peninsula – thus the relationship between nationalism and orthodoxy.

Indeed, one of the most outstanding aspects of the Korean character is the deeply rooted sense of homogeneity. From ancient times, Koreans have proudly referred to themselves as a distinct people... (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003, p. 424)

Korea protects its unique values that are collectively recognized by the community. Whether or not these values are indeed original to Korea is not necessarily the point, especially considering Hobsbawm’s theory of invented tradition. If it is agreed upon by the collective that a specific value is uniquely Korean then that is what is important. This is also significant if one also considers the importance of the group in a Confucian sense. Consensus of the group is in itself an important value in Korean society.

This assertive “invention” of an orthodox Korean identity is further reflected in many areas of society. For example, the Academy of Korean Studies, the Center for Information on Korean Culture is dedicated to “improving Korea's image by promoting accurate representations of Korean history and culture”. This organization published a booklet, *Facts and Fallacies about Korea* (2004) that attempts to clarify specifically to

non-Koreans certain facts that have been commonly misinterpreted or credited to other countries.¹⁶

Another area where orthodoxy is protected is with a strict immigration policy. Foreigners living in Korea are more strictly controlled with work visas that restrict visa holders from working outside of one company.¹⁷

Citizenship is also generally limited to Koreans and is based on ethnicity. A foreign baby born in Korea is not granted Korean citizenship if neither parent is Korean.¹⁸ These examples also show how nationalism is in some ways “official”, in that the government has a vested interest in promoting orthodoxy. The lines between “official” nationalism in the form of the promotion of orthodoxy and cultural nationalism, as an invented phenomenon are blurry in other areas.

Something deemed “traditional”, is often an assertion of orthodoxy, such as the case of the Jeju island fruits, also an expression of the importance of local goods. In this way, “traditional” is linked with nationalism and may be one of this thesis’ cause for re-examination of what the term “traditional” means.

Related to orthodoxy is that of *extremism* which is considered to be an important and unique feature of the Korean personality. This is seen, for example, in the intensity with which Korea has modernized – done at enormous human cost, or in the way protests

¹⁶ In one of the sections, Korea claims to have invented the printing press in an attempt to debunk the more commonly-held belief that it was of Chinese origin. The booklet contains several examples of these types of assertions in clarifying the origins of that which is Korean and naming the sources (generally publications from other countries) that have their facts wrong. Many Koreans feel that their country has developed a negative image in the minds of foreigners, they are keen on trying to set the record straight that Korea is no longer in a state of development.

¹⁷ English teaching is a primary job market for foreigners.

¹⁸ One of the few non-Koreans to be granted honorary citizenship was Guus Hiddink the Dutch soccer coach that elevated the Korean national team to new heights during the 2002 World Cup. This highly unusual act is actually a reflection of the Korean value of promoting and preserving Korean nationalism in that his coaching feat of getting Korea into the semi-finals, and in competition with Japan, was an event with hugely nationalistic overtones - was granted an honour of immense importance.

are carried out. Protests are incredibly well-attended, requiring swat force, nor is it entirely uncommon for people to commit suicide in the name of their cause.

All of these elements have created a nation of people who have a vested interest in expressing their distinctness – in terms of ethnicity as well as values and is derivative of the past in nationalistic ways. Preserving one's distinctness is also a protectionist act for a society that may be threatened - perceived or real - by outside influences.

Equality: Another core value in Korean society is *equality*. Referring to Weber's thesis, we are presented with a problem that seems to support his theory: How can a society based on equality also be competitive? In addition, if society is created on Confucian ideals of rank and hierarchy, then how does equality become so valued? Korean-style competition is unlike Western-style competition in the consumer market whereby an individual tries to get ahead of another, although they are both mechanisms for consumerism in a modern context. In fact, it is actually their particular perspective on equality that drives rapid adoption of new things (Rhie, p. 62-63, 2002).

In today's Korean consumer market, the rapid introduction of new goods and products are both attractive and available. Since what is important is being in agreement (again an expression of orthodoxy) of what is correct and good, competition in this way is not reflected through people necessarily *trying to get ahead of the others*, as in the Western model, but is reflected by way of everyone trying to *equalize* themselves to their neighbour. Neither falling behind nor getting too far ahead of the crowd are acceptable. To be at par with one's peers is of great importance as it helps to maintain horizontal ties and minimizes ambiguous social status. This is also Confucian in perspective in that it

places the person alongside or within the environment and does not pit the person against it.

This raises the same question that Weber raised: how does anything change in this structure? Weber recognized this model, although he equated it with an inability to compete in the western sense:

Confucian rationalism meant rational adjustment to the world; Puritan rationalism meant rational mastery of the world. (Weber, 1968, p. 248)

Weber was right in this worldview, however, it does not mean that society will only adjust to one's environment. Competition is present but generally is expressed in a different way. If one's neighbour can afford the latest in gadgets or home essentials, a new standard will be set, thus making a change in the new standard. This is reflected in the fact that apartment buildings are very similar with slight variations on the theme. Most people have similar furniture styles as well. The new and improved is, however, eagerly introduced to the market and just as eagerly awaited, therefore creating new standards on a frequent basis. This is not just standard conformity, it is a true game of catching up to join a new standard, which today is created for the consumer by giant *chaebol* companies such as Hyundai, Samsung or LG.

Koreans are concerned with equalizing themselves to others around them, because getting ahead deteriorates affiliations and therefore reduces closeness in their horizontal ties. In order to maintain ties, they will try very hard simply *not to fall behind others* – the other way to reduce ties. In sum, the pursuit for equality – sameness – drives society. To fall behind would be to disturb one's natural place in the world. This quality is further expressed in this quotation from a taxi driver from Kim, Choong Soon's ethnography on Korean Industry:

To survive in Korea you have to hustle all the time. If you don't push ahead, you do not remain the same, but you are pushed behind [....] Respect for elders, coming from the Confucian custom, is not as strong as it used to be... All these mad scrambles and the "squirrel race" [same nuance as "rat race" in English] are Korean's efforts to release the *hahn* caused by the chronic poverty for generations and the indignities under Japanese colonial rule. (Kim, 1992, p. 4)

The above alludes to several key value concepts, Korean brand of competition, a changing society that threatens the importance of respect for elders, *hahn* as a driving motivator and is further defined below, and refers to changes with relation to a Confucian past. It also suggests that values are changing in the face of modernization. One can see that a different definition of the term "equality" exists for this particular context and must be specified. For a western readership this can pose problems and lead to misinterpretation.

If one examines the same term under the western definition, we can see that in today's Korea it *too* is important. Sparked by rural land reforms of the 1950s following the Korean War, an increase in egalitarianism between non-kin in the rural village of Twisongwi was noted (Janelli, 1993, p. 40). "Equality", as a Western notion meaning to be treated or seen as an equal is also meaningful. So we see that the term, in its variants is an important value category and is further discussed in the interview section.

Hahn: *Hahn* is another key concept in the wider discussion of Korean values. It is defined as "catalytic bitterness and anger", or "unrequited resentments" (Kim, 1992, p. 4) and as "a complex of emotional states, including a sense of grief, grievances, grudges, hatred, rancor, regret, remorse and revenge" (Kim, 1985, p. 780). *Hahn* is a painful collective or individual emotion based on a difficult past experience. It can motivate or drive one in life, either resulting in failures or successes. The *Hahn* of Korea is Japanese annexation and Korean War – which was the motivator for the intense drive to rebuild the

country and the culture. An individual's *hahn* might be, for example, hardship felt by not achieving one's main goals in life, and thus letting down one's family, or by the long-lasting pain of having lost family during war, or through wartime separation of family between North and South Korea.

According to Kim Kyong-Dong (1985, p. 780), there is no single English word that can exactly describe the concept. Kim (1985) and Kim (1992) both credit *hahn* as being a major factor in Korea's economic development. It also ties into the other primary values of extremism and tenacity in that they all motivate people to reach their goals at almost any cost.

One could easily say that the dictatorship under Park Chung Hee in the 1960s following the Korean War is an example of extremist motivation rooted in a collective sense of *hahn*. A dictatorship earned by coup d'état, Hee used cheap and abundant labour forces not only to rebuild, but to build and build some more. Hee is considered a hero by some despite his heavy-handed dictatorial ways and is credited with creating a country out of rubble. This economic and political history is similar to that of Taiwan, which not coincidentally, also has a history of Japanese occupation:

During the period of their most spectacular growth none supported the theory that capitalism needs a free press, democracy, and the substantive rule of law to curb the arbitrary powers of a dictator. At least two of the four – South Korea and Taiwan – have had highly intrusive governments that challenged the free market model. (Goodell, 1995, p. 67)

The dictatorial and brutal manner in which Hee achieved an economic "miracle" is both criticized and forgiven at the same time – a true reflection of Korean extremism born out of *hahn*.

In conclusion:

...all these feelings – the continued strong sense of national unity and destiny and the catalytic bitterness and anger of the colonial experience – have been consciously and effectively harnessed in the service of economic growth by South Korea's development state. (Eckert et al., 1990, p. 408)

Choong: Many Korean values, according to Won-Bok Rhie (2002), stem from the Confucian concept of *choong*, one of several virtues. Also related to orthodoxy, *choong* is also associated with other primary virtues including filial piety, benevolence, faithfulness and righteousness – all of which are basic tenets of Confucianism. According to Rhie, *choong* is the essence of Korean character. *Choong* is the preservation of orthodox values of fairness and righteousness unfettered by private interests, and harmony and the agreement of what is right and wrong (Rhie, 2002, p. 45).

Although it has several different yet related meanings, *choong* can be further defined by its literal meaning which is 'the middle' or 'essence of all things' from the Chinese character 中. This character is based on the image of a flag which was always planted in the middle of a village – thus symbolizing the middle but also the centre of the community and by association pride for one's place of origin. It also represents the heart where values are placed ahead of personal interests and where faithfulness, sharing and what is fair to all is most important (again relating to orthodoxy) In this way, challenging what society deems to be correct goes against *choong*. "The preservation of orthodox traditions is a legacy of the *choong* spirit [...] It is exemplified by the extreme, sometimes radical temperament that developed over time" (Rhie, 2002, p. 50-51). Its clearest manifestation is in the *seonbi* or scholar that formed a sort of spiritual basis for the Korean people.

IV. INTERVIEWS

As the second part of the assessment, this section presents a total of twenty-two interviews that were conducted in order to attempt to gauge the state of traditional values in Korea today. A discussion of the answers on a question-by-question basis is provided. Translated excerpts from the interviews, as well as some full answers are provided along with the discussion, and a summary in chart form is also offered at the end.

As stated, it is important to have a sense of the state of Korean values today in order to assess the areas of strength and weakness in Weber's perspective. If one finds, for example, that Confucian values are actually in a state of change towards "modern" values, then Weber's thesis that Confucianism cannot survive a market economy holds more weight. If we find, as is most often argued, that traditional Korean values are indeed relevant today, even to some degree, then Weber's arguments require reassessment. The purpose of the interviews is not to presuppose anything about Korean values

The interviews were conducted anonymously via e-mail questionnaire. The questions are open-ended and were distributed primarily to adult college students in Busan, Korea. Although this college was primarily attended by women, a male representation is present in the interviews. They were written in the Korean language and responses translated to English.

The questions are divided into three categories in order to gain a sense of the type of values related to each category being *universals*, *traditional* and *modern*. 1) Universals included questions on family, marriage, work and religion. These were chosen as they are relevant life markers in most cultures. Participants were asked what they thought of each to gauge what type of values would be revealed in relation to each. 2) The traditional

category included questions on known Korean core values of *hahn*, loyalty and respect – all important to Confucian ethical standards. A question about Confucianism itself was included in this category in order to assess people’s view of Confucianism in itself. 3) The “modern” category included questions pertaining to free speech, leisure time, equality (in the modern, western sense) and individualism. These were asked to gain a sense of the importance of these concepts in a supposedly traditionally-based value system.

Results are interesting and shed light on a few areas as will be seen. However, in order to gain a more complete picture of the Korean imaginary with regard to these values, a much larger study would need to be conducted.

General results: The initial intent of these questions was to attempt to identify value areas that stand out among the Korean populace to begin to assess whether Confucian-based values are as tenacious as commonly held. And, which, if any value areas are of importance. In terms of quantifying such open-ended questions, one could categorize answers as being biased toward either “traditional” or “non-traditional”. This proves useful to a certain degree, but can not be conclusive as one must determine what traditional and non-traditional means for each question, and for the participants involved. In many cases, this was not feasible. For example, a woman who believes in marriage does not necessarily believe in an old-style Confucian marriage. In addition, someone who feels loyalty or respect is important may not feel that it should be unconditional or obligatory. Female respondents may also respond that work is very important to them and that it requires self-discipline and long hours, but traditionally, women were not the workers in the household.

Despite this problematic, there were some tendencies that did stand out. These are discussed on a questions by question basis in the next sections.

Presentation and discussion of interview questions

What does family mean to you?

This question garnered the strongest and most uniform opinions. All 22 responses reflected the fact that family was of utmost importance to them. A sample of the answers are represented by the following excerpts:

“Family is the most important thing in my life and can’t be substituted by anything else.”

“No matter what kind of work I do and what difficulties I may face, only my family will support and believe me until the end. Besides, family exercises the strongest influence on me to become an essential member of the society.”

“It is the basis and the core of my life.”

“Family is the object into which I could pour endless love and sacrifice. The very fact that I am able to be here to answer this survey is proof of their sacrifice for me.”

“Family means a great deal of support for me – whether I am going through a hard time, facing fear or being happy, I know that they are there for me. This also means that I feel responsible/obligated for their support, and this sense of responsibility is what holds me together even when I feel down.”

The Confucian ethical system is not vague. Relationships and how they are to be managed are very clearly delineated. In this case, it is the parent-child relationship that is clearly of utmost importance.

Family ties that are severed are considered to be the greatest tragedy. A person without an intact family is considered an incomplete member of society. This tragedy of rootlessness came out in discussion with a co-worker whereby she mentioned the recent death of her mother. She continued to convey that this was a tragedy in more than one way in that her family was no longer considered to be whole and therefore her sentiments reflected that she was no longer a complete person. She was referring to feeling like she

was no longer felt she had a secure place within the social structure. This person even expressed that her friends treated her with less respect given this fact. Her family structure had been severed therefore making her feel incomplete in her relationships to others. She felt shame in this.

This can also be related to the situation with orphans in Korea. A devoted volunteer in the orphanages in Korea, said how he would encourage the kids to leave Korea when they were old enough, knowing how their status as orphans would affect them later in life. He mentioned that despite his efforts to help them settle elsewhere, most would stay in Korea.

Generally, parents are expected to sacrifice their own material comforts in order to fully support (financially and otherwise) their child. Since education is the foremost indicator of one's status, this is where a great deal of effort is made on behalf of the parents. The child is also owed care and a moral formation. In return, the child is expected to obey, respect and care for their parents in their old age. In today's Korea, this means that the parent's primary goal is to ensure a high status position for the child and to do whatever necessary to achieve this. One could study the Korean education system in this light alone as it epitomizes the spirit of the *seonbi*¹⁹ – the virtuous scholar as being most respected for their devotion to education. In this way, family and education are intimately linked.

Today, the *seonbi* tradition has today manifested itself into what is sometimes referred to as “Education Fever”. The emphasis on education is a very Confucian ideal in that a good education and therefore becoming a successful member of society brings

¹⁹ *Seonbi* are traditionally male Confucian scholars of the Choseon Dynasty (1392-1910) who dedicated their lives to mastering Confucian texts and to living by Confucian principles. This is the “ideal type” upon which Weber bases his arguments about Confucianism and capitalism.

honour to the family and contributes to national development (Rhie, 2002, p. 164).

Education is a way to ensure survival in case of national turmoil, provides a way out of poverty, and also ensures that an entire family can be cared for.

This also ties in to the pressure that most first-born boys feel to be the most successful of the family and the pressure to succeed in rigorous entrance exams after high school. There is an enormous amount of emphasis and importance placed on the entrance exams in that the student's score is a direct reflection on the universities they are allowed to go to and as with most things in Korean society, schools are clearly ranked in terms of prestige. Kids throughout their elementary, middle and high school years thus spend an enormous amount of time in after-school academies (*hagwon*²⁰) and with tutors – all in the lengthy build-up to the rigorous examination period. The structure of these exams emphasizes the memorization of all information learned during that time – emphasizing the importance placed on wrote learning. Wrote learning and the written examination process are a direct connection to the *seonbi* tradition and is alive and well in modern Korea.²¹ One can see that family, status, education and nationalism are closely tied to each other in the above ways.

²⁰ *Hagwon* are the prevalent cram schools that most children attend after regular school hours to learn various subjects including English and other languages, math and music. Different from tutoring centres in that they are primarily geared towards passing specific exams, including the all important college entrance exams. University entrance is fiercely competitive and primarily based on the results of these exams.

²¹ To illustrate this, I worked in an international school and taught English literature and grammar to high school students. Most students were of Korean descent. Other students were from other countries including the United States, Russia, Poland, and Germany. The Korean students – many of whom had attended regular Korean school in their primary or middle school years had an extremely difficult time participating in open discussion about their readings. The idea of open discussion was simply to get them to consider, criticize, and debate about what they had read. The American students were most vocal, understanding the idea of participation and debate – having been introduced to this type of learning environment early on. The Korean students tended to be quiet until a right or wrong question would come up showing a preference for memorization. The school's Poetry Month, on the other hand, was a great success in that it gave the opportunity to each student to memorize and recite poems, an activity which the Korean students embraced wholeheartedly and mastered with precision.

What does religion mean to you?

Given the visibility of the Catholic Church in Korea, it was expected that the Catholic voice would be well-heard among respondents. The Korean adoption of Catholicism has been wholehearted and successful in comparison to other East Asian countries. As mentioned earlier, this is perhaps because of the Confucian tolerance of other religions and for the lack of a god and explanation for the afterlife. Buddhists in Korea appear to be more discreet about their faith, however, and as is the nature of Buddhism, does not require formal adherence. It is less contractual as a religion (meaning conversion or adherence is decisive, not conscriptive or ceremonial). There are also a high percentage of the populace (approximately 40%) that do not adhere to any formal religion – this phenomenon was actually supported by the interviews in that only one person stated they were of Christian faith, and one of the Buddhist faith. Eight people stated outright that they did not have a religion. The rest either defined the term religion, stated that it didn't mean much to them, had no opinion on the matter or did not specify what they believed in. This may not necessarily mean that they are non-believers, just that they are not formal members which could easily be the interpreted criteria for "having a religion".

Some samples of answers include:

"I don't have religion. However, for ordinary people, religion means another existence which they rely on and believe in."

"It doesn't mean much to me."

"...I don't have a religion, but I don't have negative opinions about religious beliefs itself."

"It brings peace and guides me in a modest way."

"I am a Buddhist but I don't know all the words of Buddha, nor do I go to the temple regularly. It is the love and respect I have for Buddha that entitles me to the name 'Buddhist'..."

"I have no opinion on the matter."

"FYI, I have no religion. But it's something people rely on to feel reassured when there's no one to give them such reassurance."

"It doesn't mean much, but I do sometimes search for God (or divine being) when I am in a situation beyond my control."

"It's what you depend on - but fanaticism could lead to problems."

"Something I could depend on when feeling down."

"I don't believe/have a religion."

Weber viewed Confucianism as a religion but recognizes its limitations in this regard. Tu Weiming (1992) sees it as a spiritual tradition that is neither secular nor transcendent. "[...] it is 'anthropocosmic' in that it embraces a concern for both the secular world here and now and the world beyond" (Tu, 1992, p. 18). Other sources include it in religious discussions with the statement that it is not technically a religion, however, it has its followers. As a formal following, Korea historically had Confucian academies where the upper class would go to learn about Confucian ways and texts. Today, these academies or *hyanggyo* are mainly tourist sites – some of which are used to memorialize ancestral Confucian scholars – a few are still used as Confucian academies and Seongkyunkwan University in Seoul still has students who devote their time to Confucian studies. Confucianism evidently holds a very ambiguous spot among religions. Confucianism generally seems to be viewed as a value system that influences various facets of life, rather than a religion.

In a country where Buddhism and Catholicism are the most visible religions, one might expect interview answers to reflect an adherence to one or the other. Currently, Buddhists make up 25.3 percent of the population and Christians (Protestant and Catholics) make up another 26 percent (KOIS, 2003). Therefore, half of the population

claim to formally adhere to some form of religion and Korea is known as being the most Christianized of Asian countries.²²

What does work mean to you?

Seven participants stated that work was a way to fulfil material needs. Thirteen said that it provides satisfaction and accomplishment in life. Korea has a very interesting and observable workplace culture, especially in the areas of hierarchies, power and work habits. In the Korean workplace one can observe Confucian ideals of rank at play, embracing the core values of loyalty and deference (to one's boss), and self-sacrifice in the form of long work hours. However, these phenomena did not stand out in the interviews. Given that most participants were female, What *is* interesting is that given that most of the participants were women, there was not one person who expressed an interest in *not* working

Some excerpts of answers include:

- "I think everyone should work."
- "It's a way to earn money."
- "A process to develop myself, to learn and see many things."
- "It's a way to let the world know of my existence."
- "It is an aggregation of my experience, requires patience, tenacity and effort."
- "An obligation - it completes one's life."

As further discussed in the question on Confucianism, the status of women in Korea is still an issue. With so many women feeling the need to work and with the Korean social system that is still putting pressure on them to be homemakers after they have children, tension exists between women and the workplace. This is reflected in the fact that women are generally expected to quit their jobs if they become pregnant and

²² Although there are several reasons that account for this, a significant factor was Christian involvement in Korean nationalist movements during Japanese colonialism (KOIS, 2003).

employers do not often provide for maternity leave, despite labour laws. As with everything in Korea, things are changing rapidly, however women still generally hold a disadvantageous position in many workplaces as echoed by Janelli: "...the women workers were not managerial-track employees, their stay at Taesong was intended to be temporary, and thus they were a different and far less advantaged fraction of the new middle class" (Janelli, 1993, p. 11). However, he also points out that this position gave them the freedom to voice themselves quite strongly on various matters.

To conclude, the workplace appears to harbour some tensions with regard to Confucian values and the greater role that women have in the workplace.

What does marriage mean to you?

Many participants expressed what they thought marriage *should* be, rather than what they thought of it as it actually is. On the other hand, one interviewee mentioned that they didn't really think everyone had to be married and another didn't feel it was a priority. Although traditionally marriage is non-negotiable, there appears to be tension between traditional values and opinions of the female participants. Although women may view marriage as an end to their freedom, generally they will marry it out of obligation to their parents. This is perhaps reason for a high divorce rate in Korea. One must also remember that marriage may not be viewed as a positive thing even though most enter into it. The pressure to marry is great and traditional matchmakers were frequently hired by parents, and even today internet matchmaking is quite popular. The choice not to marry is considered quite eccentric and is considered impractical since it does not secure one's future.

Some excerpts follow:

“I think everyone should marry...I want to live with my lover until I die like friends, brothers and sisters, mentors and parents.”

“It is not a priority for me. It would be nice to be together with someone I could see as my lifelong companion, that is, if I find one – if I don't, it won't be too distressing for me to live unmarried.”

“It means to step into yet another set of social binding – a difficult one that is.”

“A stable economic bondage between two incomplete individuals realized through a process of maturation.”

Marriage in Korea is considered an important milestone and generally, a mandatory one if one wants to maintain status and horizontal ties in social relationships. Although some of the voices in the interviews seemed to be quite progressive in that they felt that marriage was not such a priority, it appears that it is more of a priority for men. Men generally cannot be promoted to higher rank job positions if they are not married, preferably with children. Because of the importance of basic relationships, in this case of husband to wife, one may not be considered a complete person (and therefore unqualified for a high ranking job) if one does not have these relationships established in one's life.²³

What does Confucianism mean to you?

When asked about Confucianism in general, many participants inferred that it is something of the past. On the other hand, nineteen participants acknowledged its presence in society. The others had “no knowledge of it”, called it an “old religion” and “never gave it a thought”. Generally, the nineteen participants provided personal definitions that generally referred to it as something that provides the teachings for basic

²³ It is also for this reason that homosexuality in Korea is barely visible. In past decades, homosexuality was condemned as something that came from the West. In current years, the rhetoric has changed in that AIDS is seen as a foreign import. Indeed, if a foreigner is diagnosed with HIV while working in Korea, he or she is swiftly deported from the country. The government does not have any official policy or standpoint regarding homosexuality. Essentially, if one does not hold an accepted position within the social structure, one simply does not have a place within society. One is not necessarily shunned, but one's standing is ambiguous. Other people who generally hold ambiguous standing include foreigners and orphans.

etiquette, behavioural code and moral values. As expected, no one expressed any type of active devotion to it as it is not generally considered a formal religion.

Although several participants mentioned that Confucianism was something of the past, something traditional, it was also mentioned that they understood that these ways were of influence in society and within each person today. Three participants also felt it necessary to mention that they found that there are some negative aspects of Confucianism although they did not elaborate what those may be. One person even used the term "evil". This may have been because the majority of participants were women or it may be reflective of a general sentiment that Confucianism of the old days was oppressive and rigid. This sentiment may not be exclusive to this sample:

Another form of resistance was to grant readily that Taesong's management was Confucian but to ascribe an alternative meaning to that term. Instead of adopting it as an emblem of Korean national identity, Confucianism was used as a symbol of national embarrassment, a code word for old-fashioned, conservative, and authoritarian rule. Sometimes uttered in disgust, it became a multivocal symbol. (Janelli, 1993, p. 225)

Some excerpts of answers included:

"teaches basic propriety."

"It is difficult to make any judgement about Confucianism that is so pervasive in Korea society because the culture of filial duty, respect for elderly and other teachings of Confucianism provides positive guidelines, while there is just as much evil in the centuries-old custom. I hope the negative practices of Confucianism would be eradicated in the modern era."

"Haven't given much thought to it."

"Good and bad, but personally I see it as a negative thing."

"It is something that is indispensable in modern life - the more bleak society is, the stronger is the need for such doctrine."

"Something that's already embedded in me without realizing."

"Tradition that persists and pervades our society."

"I admire the ways in which our ancestors have kept their values and tradition but I also believe that it is time to change these customs and values using Christianity as the guideline."

"An old religion, traditional lifestyle."

"It's a duty like something that I feel I have to do because it is my moral or legal responsibility, otherwise I feel very bad. For example, I have to bow when I meet someone I know

and older than me but if I don't I feel guilty even though the person I meet doesn't care."

"...What we now practice is Confucianism"

What does loyalty mean to you?

Some excerpts / examples of answers:

"Loyalty is devotion toward a king or a nation. For me loyalty means a "cornerstone of inter-personal relationship." Therefore, we always should have loyalty when we meet our friends, teachers, parents and brothers and sisters."

"It is an essential factor needed to live in society"

"Parents, elders, my professors / teachers. It should be assumed as basics in life but not blindly accepted."

"To be loyal to your country, parents and spouse should be a must, though it should be more reciprocal than unilateral."

"I haven't given it a serious thought before, but young people should have more of it."

"It is unchanging trust."

"For a nation and for a person I respect."

There is no doubt to the fact that loyalty is an important feature in relationships as it is one of the Cardinal Virtues (integrity, righteousness, loyalty, altruism and goodness) in Confucianism but we also see in these answers some indication as to the importance of certain positions such as public servant and teacher – both positions of high rank due to the importance given to them by Confucius as bearers and teachers of Confucian principals in their work. The high ranking position of professor is also significant historically speaking when one considers the *seonbi* and their importance in the Korean imaginary.

Four interviews also equated the term loyalty with "respect" and three others mentioned loyalty to one's nation as being important. Two others stated that it should be reciprocal – implying an egalitarian view and another stated that loyalty should be present but not blind.

Interviewees who mentioned people to whom one should be loyal in all cases mentioned the higher ranking person in one of the five basic relationships – except for the

friend. Even among friends, a rank is established. When all things are equal, in age, job position and when one has many similar organizational ties and in horizontal relationships – one can only then be true friends. Friends will often join the same organizations – and seek out organizations to join together - in order to strengthen their bond. This also, in part, explains the popularity of the Korean equivalent of Facebook web sites (CyWorld) as it creates a modern virtual forum where ties can be strengthened among peers. An interesting forum, it can also be used to break all the rules of rank.

This question was chosen for the following reasons: In Confucian thought, loyalty, like obedience, self-discipline, obligation and sacrifice among others, is a key concept. This can be seen among friends, between parent and child or between boss and employee and is readily observable in Korean society. Confucian texts show that loyalty and reciprocity go together as a sort of checks and balances system. This means that even if one is of higher rank to another, one should not treat the person of lower rank in a way you would not want to be treated. This is supposed to prevent blind loyalty and abuse of power.

Given that the Korean language reflects the ranking system in its terms of address, one needs to know where you stand in relation to another person. When this is a complete unknown, age will be determined first barring other factors.

What does hahn mean to you?

“...a mixed sentiment of grudge and chagrin. When a grudge deeply rooted in our heart isn't resolved, we become to have *hahn* in our heart. In the past when women had to obey their husbands, most of women had *hahn* of their own and there are many poems regarding the sad emotion. I also have *hahn* because I made a wrong decision when choosing a university and it probably will last forever. In Korea, parents tend to relieve their *hahn* caused by the fact that they couldn't do what they really wanted to through their children.”

“I haven't thought about it. Not very important.”

"It is sorrow-deep-rooted in my heart."

"It is the power to embrace or endure sorrow."

"It is called the superego sentiment of our nation."

"It is a sentiment particular to Koreans. It could be a catalyst and inspiration for the arts, but may not always be so beneficial in other sectors of society."

"I did have some painful experience in the past: It was an unavoidable dissonance within my family, but now I accept it as a small memory of the past. *Hahn* means great sorrow or pain that could persist to exist in the present, tethering you. But if one maintains a positive attitude, *hahn* could also be a point in life which one could reflect upon to improve oneself."

"Something that needs to be resolved before dying."

"Everyone has *hahn*, but there's no such thing as irresolvable *hahn*. It is you who creates it, so it is also you who could lessen it or end it by changing your perspective."

"I think Korean society asks for sacrifice too much in many aspects of our lives, and that causes *hahn*. When one is asked to sacrifice too much in the name of love for one's parents, husband, children and so on, *hahn* forms in one's mind. If I could love and sacrifice within my capacity, there wouldn't be any *hahn*."

As one can see, *hahn* is tied to an individual's values and influences them in their daily lives as well as in the longer term. However, *hahn* - true to the Confucian emphasis on the group - is also viewed as a collective sentiment. As discussed earlier with regard to the Korean motivation to develop, Kim (1992) expressed how the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 "heightened the emotional trauma of Koreans due to the loss of their dignity and pride" leading to an enhanced intensity of nationalism and the particular intensity one sees among Koreans in their actions and motivations.

Since the interviews were primarily members of a younger generation that have not seen hardships of war and were born into an already developed nation, a sense of *hahn* seemed to be expressed on an individual level. The collective notion of *hahn* may not be realized in the younger generation because of the lack of need to rebuild a nation and lives, in fact only two interviews implied that it belonged to the Korean people as a whole. The last participant implied that *hahn* is a result of being asked to sacrifice too much in one's life. This suggests a more modern interpretation in that quality of life is seen as more important than assuring the survival of the next generation.

What does respect mean to you?

The term *respect* in the Korean sense requires some clarification here. Although respect is not a purely Korean ideal, it does have a more particular meaning in Korea. The term 존경 (*jon-gyung*), was used in the question which loosely translates as "respect," in English. The English usage of the word could both mean propriety shown to others in horizontal relations (i.e. "respect others for their differences"), and a sense of admiration (i.e. "a respectful scholar"). Koreans most often use the term when describing someone they look up to. In addition, *looking up* to someone also has a different meaning when one considers the importance of rank. One *looks up to another* in terms of prescribed rank – i.e. in a more literal sense - rather than the western view where we “look up” to someone in admiration.

One must “show” respect to anyone of higher rank– regardless of whether they have earned it (in a western interpretation) or not. Respect is shown, in part, by how one addresses someone, in the use of titles, and through honorific suffixes in the Korean language. It is also shown by bowing, and by obeying the wishes of other’s or in the agreement of their opinion and wishes. It is hoped that one feels the desire to behave in such a manner because one genuinely admires this person and feels one can learn from them. However, the reality does not necessarily mean the person of lower rank actually admires / respects the person (in the western sense), or even *likes* them for that matter. This can be a source of emotional difficulty for many as I have seen friends who struggled to maintain respectful behaviour while actually despising a person of higher rank – mostly within a boss / employee relationship.

Also to add to the confusion, many participants answered this question referring to the term in the western sense as the term *jon-gyung* is sometimes used to denote admiration, of a role model, for example. Other times, both senses of the term are referred to. This was perhaps done because they knew it was a foreigner who was conducting the study or simply because when asked about it in this way – it was understood in a particular way. In sum, the term is used in a few ways including to revere in esteem, to admire, and also denotes particular behaviours when in the presence of a person of higher rank.

Some answers to this question follow:

“It is a basic attitude which I should have toward people I know.”

“It is to try to imitate good appearances”

“Respect is to admire a person who teaches me.”

“When I learn from superior people such as mentors and parents and feel that there is something to learn from them, I come to have respect toward them.”

“It is important in my life, it shows the success of my life. I want to be a respectful person, and have many people who I can respect. The more I am a respectful person, the more successful my life is. Everyone has a right to be treated with respect.”

Actions or words that you want to follow. Meticulous self-management.”

“It is an absolute must in any human relations. By respecting others I feel at ease and could expect to be treated in the same manner.”

“It is a desire to become like someone you admire for their virtue and probity. It must be present between spouses, parents and children, and teacher and students.”

What does free speech mean to you?

The last three questions are part of the “modern values” category, that includes values related to free speech, equality, individualism and leisure. The intent on choosing this category of questions was to attempt to gauge how integrated these values are in today’s Korea.

Fourteen participants implied that it was a freedom or right and/or associated it with a democratic society. Others simply defined the term to the best of their knowledge.

Some answers included:

- "It is freedom with appropriate rules and control"
- "It is a right to know and speak facts."
- "It is a factor necessary for society, for democracy in Korea in particular."
- "It is very important for me and our society. Everyone has the right to know the truth."
- "Everyone should be free to say anything in his view."
- "Any methods and contents of communication that could convey the meaning using a considerate/refrained language could be considered free speech. It needs to be considerate to others and social values."
- "To break free from external constriction and to express one's thoughts freely."
- "Freedom is granted to all, but abusive use of it can hurt others. It is the same for the media as well - they should be even more careful."
- "Media sometimes carries the negative connotation like the title 'the king of writers'. But without free speech (like under a dictatorship) things will be like what W.I. Thomas calls "Definition of the Situation".
- "it is the most basic of all freedoms, and true freedom necessitates free speech."
- "A right that was won in exchange for lives and must be enjoyed by all." ²⁴

It is interesting to note that a couple of participants referred to its importance *within appropriate limits*. It is also interesting that it was referred to as a freedom. Within traditional Korean relationships, the freedom to express one's opinion is present but sometimes limited depending on one's status within the relationship. For example, a grandson wouldn't dream of contradicting his grandfather in opinion as this would be considered a serious breach of propriety and would result in a considerable amount of shame upon the entire family. Likewise, an employee would not provide input on a matter unless asked for given his or her lower status.

²⁴ This is perhaps in reference to the pro-democracy Kwangju Uprising in 1980 – known as 5.18 - where hundreds of civilians were killed protesting military rule after a coup d'état.

Also of note is that many participants referred to it in terms of the media, rather than in general. Other answers explained that it is essential for the public to know the truth. We must recall that Korea has a longer history of strong arm rule and dictatorship than it does democracy.

What does equality mean to you?

This question was chosen because under the Confucian system, there are very few equal relationships. Even though the notion of equality is very important in traditional terms, it is used to keep up with the group – to stay on par with others so as not to get left behind. *Equality* in terms of the elimination of discrimination, creating equal roles for men and women, etc., is still an issue of debate for many people in Korea, and is seen as a modern construct. Given the strict ranking of people in the social structure, it seems that this sense of the term would be difficult to reconcile with other traditional values.

Some examples of answers:

“I really like the word ‘equality’ - it means to treat everything and everyone equally. I intend to keep it as the principle value of my life.”

“Some sort of door that opens up to a much larger world? I think Korean society is trying to import it but hasn’t quite achieved it yet.”

“It is equality in a Korean sense, not unconditional equality.”

“To have no sexual discrimination in terms of career: not to have such things as ‘jobs for men’ or ‘jobs for women’”.

“A horizontal relation where no one is above the other.”

“Everyone is born equal and should stay that way. You can only reach the truth when equality is achieved.”

“The particularity of women and the sexual difference should be acknowledged.”

“Men and women should naturally be equal. I don’t know about situations in foreign countries, but male chauvinism has prevailed in Korea from long ago. However, the situation is different now. Female power is shaking males. These days, women are taking part in social life and developing more than men.”

“It is very important. I’ve experienced lots of unfairness between men and women especially at work. It made me very angry but I couldn’t do anything about it.”

“In the past, society considered women’s status as lower than of men, so women were ignored. However, now men and women are thought to be equal and outcomes made by women are by no means

worse than those by men...it's the same with black and white people."

As the question was worded generally but giving the example of equality between the sexes, it was designed to gain insight into people's thoughts on the western notion of the term. What was revealed quite clearly is that the term is not defined universally, it is seen as an import and that total equality is a rather abstract notion, that may be impossible to achieve. Most Koreans feel that equality is present but conditional. The conditions being supplied by ranking and structure of the five basic relationships.

In considering equality between men and women, women have had much to overcome in terms of being fully integrated into the new economy. In older times, women's roles were specific to the household:

In traditional Korean society, women were largely confined to the home. From a young age, women were required to learn the Confucian virtues of subordination and endurance to prepare for their future roles as wife and mother, while being denied any opportunity to participate in activities outside the home. Their role was limited to the management of the large extended family and the producing of a male heir so that the family line might continue unbroken.

And the discrimination between the sexes in favor of the male-based, as it was, on feudal Confucianism-dominated all aspects of women's lives. As a result, women had to live subordinated to men. (Paik, Introduction, 1998)

Although great strides have been made in improving the status of women in Korea, there are still significant areas whereby women are not represented fully. Such areas include equal salaries to men, actual practice of maternity leave laws, and entry to high ranking positions in business and government.²⁵

What does individualism mean to you?

²⁵ Although Korea now has had its first female Prime Minister, but she resigned after one year.

This question was chosen as it is in apparent conflict with the Korean emphasis on the group, yet is an accepted feature of post-industrialized nations. This emphasis is seen in many aspects of Korean life, in particular in the specific form of competition - keeping up with the rest of the group rather than setting oneself apart from it.

Some excerpts follow:

"It is behaviour pursuing one's profit only without considering others."

"To pursue one's own profit."

"It is similar to egoism in that both don't consider other's positions."

"It's important because individualism increases the rate of crime and makes the society weak and unhealthy such as mental problems."

"It is to think an individual is gaining the upper hand over the society or nation."

"This is an obstacle not to develop group and society."

"If one leads a self-centred life, I guess that could be counted as individualism?"

"Individualism is where a person's own benefits takes priority over others'."

"As a person brought up in a society where *jung* (or *choong*) [compassion, care, emotional attachment] and the notion of sharing is so central, individualism comes as more of egotism. Individualism could seem negative in the light of altruism, but the same also applies vice versa: excessive altruism could be at a cost of the persons' own benefit. But I still give preference to altruism over individualism because individualism doesn't have *jung*."

"Tidy, respectful to others, knows the idea of privacy...it's still very much of a foreign concept."

"I do not agree with the selfishness and egotism that individualists often slip into, but I also don't like those who have no respect for individualism and are officious and attach themselves to others too closely. 'The middle' is always difficult to achieve."

"to live freely while respecting the norms and values of a group/society one is surrounded by."

"To exercise one's right within the boundary of respecting others."

There are obviously strong negative feelings that many participants (13) conveyed about individualism. Two others connected it to the more positive idea of freedom, but both mentioned respecting others around them at the same time. Two even acknowledged it as a foreign concept.

In individualistic societies, children are reared to be independent not dependent. They are expected to learn how to fend for themselves, how to deal with life's problems themselves – to not to have to go to a family member for help or financial aid is a source of pride and asking a family member for the same a source of shame. This is in general opposition to the Korean perspective.

Reciprocity and a strong sense of sharing is not exclusive to family ties but also to all group relationships and is reflected on many levels and areas of Korean culture. Korean children are taught at an incredibly early age to share whatever they have in their hands with others around them. Strangers on a train or bus consistently share their snacks with the strangers sitting next to them. Food packaging reflects this value as well; many cookies and snack items are individually wrapped for easy sharing and for carrying of multiples. And finally, meals are eaten from many communal shared bowls, except for the rice which is individually portioned. Some participants felt that this culture of sharing and shared sense of community is threatened or even a thing of the past and hint that it is because of modernization or the effects of globalization:

“With development of information and telecommunications, individualism has prevailed in our society. We are living in such a dismal reality. Neighbours in the past used to sympathize and help one another, but now they don't even know who lives next door. They are reluctant to let other people know their private life. At schools also, an increasing number of students live independently. As competition gets fiercer, people want to be more successful and in consequence such individualism is becoming stronger.”

What does work/life balance mean to you?

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1945), in post-industrialized societies, needs are supposed to have reached a point where issues of leisure, well-being and quality of life have become important. There is some evidence that this is occurring

in Korea. One particular trend in Korea involves the use of the English word “well-being”. It is used in the consumer context where foods are sold as “well-being” foods, activities are promoted as such as well. It refers to a lifestyle mode where people take care of themselves by enjoying their free time, by eating healthily and taking vitamins and by exercising for the sake of staying in shape. This trend is ‘sold’ on television mostly and in advertising for certain products and services.

Other indications of an increased focus on leisure include the official introduction of the five-day work week, and school children were recently given every other Saturday off – previously they were in school five and a half days per week, every week.

On the other hand, Koreans, like the Japanese, work very long hours. In a survey conducted by the Swiss financial firm UBS, it was found that people from Seoul, Korea worked the most hours per year, 2300, than any other country, out of 71 countries surveyed (Arirang News agency, 2006). These long workdays may also be related to the Confucian ethos that rewards total dedication and self-sacrifice. At the Korean embassy, it was accepted that employees would stay at work late, especially if the ambassador was there late as well. However, it was also well known that some employees would close their office door during the day for a nap, and lunch hours were officially two hours long. The reward is not necessarily for being the most productive employee, but one’s presence and availability is important in showing dedication. This was not without exceptions, for great sympathy and leniency can be shown by management in times of need, as was seen when one employee’s child fell ill.

With these tendencies in place, a new perspective on increased leisure time and the actual demands of the workplace, we are presented with somewhat of a conflict. Is

there really a clash between the old and the new in this case? Is personal time seen solely as a reward for hard work or is it seen as a right?

Some of the participants' answers are as follows:

"In my opinion, work and life are interacting. As I work harder, my future will develop more. For this reason, all people work hard. In our life, leisure is a hope. By enjoying leisure, we can relieve our physical fatigue, we can make trips and shake off everything and enjoy ourselves after getting out of our daily life."

"Both are important but work is more important because it means the wealth."

"I think we should live enjoying both work and leisure. If we concentrate our energy on earning money and don't realize value of our life repeating same things, our life will become really dull. If we work hard and take time to hike, swim, travel and enjoy our hobbies with people whom we like, our life will be more satisfactory and healthier. And then we will be able to perform our work better."

"My life will be meaningless if I have too much leisure. Therefore, my life will be happier by working moderately."

"Work without leisure means nothing - You earn happiness as you balance between hard work and the leisure to do what you want in the remaining time."

"Leisure is a small reward for hard work."

"Privilege granted to those who worked hard."

"You work hard to earn leisure, and you go back to work after the relaxation."

"This is the most difficult question so far. If one could balance well between work, family and my own time, one would be enjoying the greatest pleasure that God has given us. But you can't always be happy! It is life after all..."

"By enjoying the leisure I want, I could relieve the work stress and work more efficiently. To balance work and life, you need leisure."

"It is to be recognized for my values. Leisure is a respite from work to reinvigorate yourself."

"It is difficult to balance work and leisure. If you could, it would be ideal to relieve the work stress through leisure."

Participants largely viewed leisure as a reward for hard work. Alternatively, others saw leisure as a tool to help one work better. No one expressed a right to leisure time regardless of their work habits – it was outwardly seen as something earned. This generally follows the Confucian values of hard work, self-discipline and sacrifice, but could also be typical answers in any society. All in all, this category revealed mixed results, opinions differing from the observed "promotion" of wellbeing and leisure time.

Value chart

The following chart reflects the general results of the interviews and provides a basic explanation to complement the written analysis.

Value category	General tendency / comment	Possible explanation	General conclusion
“Universals”			
Family	Extremely important to all participants. Most answers were reflective of strong feelings toward their parents.	The Confucian relationship between parent and child is paramount whereby the parent sacrifices their own material comforts for the education and well-being of the child and the child owes the parent respect, obedience and care in their old age. Parent-child relationship mirrors ruler-to-ruled relationship.	Traditional perspective
Religion	Most participants did not have or think much about religion. Others mentioned that it brings “peace” and “guidance”.	May have to do with age cohort in sample – and may also lend credence to secularization theories of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, Marx and Freud.	Mixed perspectives
Work	All participants felt that work was a necessary part of life, and a means to satisfy one’s self and one’s material needs.	Since most of the participants were women, it is remarkable that none mentioned they did not want to work – especially given a continued pressure to be homemakers.	Mixed perspectives, with tension revealed in area of women in the workplace
Marriage	Some participants did not feel it a priority, many idealised it, while others saw it simply as a start of another chapter in one’s life.	Because of the primarily female sample, the answers may be biased. As Korea is still conservative in its traditions – especially for men looking for higher ranking jobs – if the question had been asked to primarily men, it might have garnered a different angle on the issue.	Mixed perspectives, possibly divided by gender
“Traditional”			
Confucianism	Did not reveal any tendency related to specific values. Generally recognized as an influence on moral values, customs and teaching basic propriety. Several viewed it as old or traditional.	Sample was mostly in their 20s and answers may reflect a generation gap whereby Confucian values are seen as something “old fashioned”. May be related to predominately	Mixed perspectives

	Some mentioned its negative aspects as well but did not specify which ones.	female sample in that Confucianism is widely known as being a male-dominated system.	
Loyalty	Answers mostly reflected Confucian ideals of respect and obedience – some added exceptions mentioning reciprocity, not accepting it blindly. The mention of family, nation, teacher also came up in some answers – Most interesting was mention of those in Korean society considered to be of high rank or deserving of respect – teacher and parents mentioned a few times.	Some answers reflected the hierarchical structure of being loyal to those of higher rank – teacher and parents. Others mentioned being loyal to one’s nation – also reflective of the strong nationalistic values of Koreans. Strongly reflective of Confucian ethics. Teachers and public servants are seen as people who strive to be ethical through “self-cultivation, study and practice of appropriate behaviour.” (Oldstone-Moore, 2002, p. 55).	Mixed perspectives
Hahn	Viewed as something of the past in the collective sense. Many referred to it as something that could affect the individual or family rather than the nation.	A shift from defining it as a national sentiment to an individual or family sentiment may be occurring. Perhaps because a nationalistic sense of <i>hahn</i> is no longer needed as a motivation for protection or development.	Maintenance of traditional perspective yet under different circumstances
Respect	Mixed answers mostly pertaining to admiration, an idealized relationship where those of higher rank are valued.	Somewhat contradictory to observations. Respect is often shown (out of duty?) but not felt, except in the case of family members.	Traditional perspective
“Modern”			
Free speech	Some answers referred specifically to the media, whereas others to the right to know the truth (in government). Others defended the concept as a basic right.	Essentially in line with typical western ideas of the concept. No answers showed interference with Confucian concepts that may limit free speech such as obedience or loyalty.	Modern perspective but conditional
Equality	Most participants simply tried to define the term. The rest, however, primarily voiced that equality between men and women is important.	Most participants were female. By western standards, Korea is more male-centred, most women have experienced some type of discrimination in their lives – however, only one participant mentioned this. Observation indicates a level of tenacity of Confucian values of subservience and lower status.	Traditional Korean perspective, yet showing understanding of western sense of the term
Individualism	Generally negative views about it. Saw it as an obstacle to a healthy society. Ties into the strong family views in	Notable since most participants are in their twenties and thirties. This value is seemingly less changing than others.	Traditional perspective

	that the family is the most important of groups.		
Work/life balance	Many answers implied that leisure was a reward for hard work or that some leisure is a means to work better. Implication is that work comes first. Leisure time is not seen a given. Others also implied that they did not have a balance of work and leisure in their lives.	Typical of Confucian emphasis on work, self-discipline and sacrifice – whereby rewards are only given to those who earn it through hard work.	Mixed perspectives, conflict between the observed and reality

V. DISCUSSION AND ARGUMENTS

New society / old values: Explaining the compatibility question

Having established in the previous sections the status of particular values in Korean society and alternate theories to help explain the Korean case, it is now possible to move on in identifying the particular areas whereby Weber’s theories require revisiting. This aids in building a working theory as to how and why Korea has become what it is today – a traditionally-oriented society that has grown beyond anyone’s predictions. This section responds to Weber’s arguments in reference to the research and interviews conducted for this study. In particular, areas that have been revealed that challenge Weber’s argument are discussed.

Modern societies are characterized, in part, whereby “traditional sources of authority are weaker as bureaucratic institutions assume responsibility and power and where status relations are based less on such ascriptive criteria as age, gender, or ethnicity and more on meriocratic criteria” (Borgatta, 2000, p. 1985). Korea meets the

characteristics of a modern society in its high levels of urbanization, literacy, access to education, mass media, and others. Yet, other elements, such as status relationships and filial ties remain important in the social imaginary.

As mentioned, it seems that Korea has gone against Weber's predictions in that it is both a capitalized, consumer-based society *and* a country that maintains adherence to traditional values. For a historically insular and self-protective society, this is a tricky exercise in balancing its essential character of *choong* and orthodoxy while becoming a major global participant. So how does Korea resolve these supposed conflicts? The following discuss a few of the specific areas where Korea manages combine its own form of traditionalism with modernization, as well as a more clear picture of some ways in which a developing Korea discouraged some Western standards while industrializing.

Traditionalism as a catalyst for development

In contrast to Weber's view that Confucianism detracts from the possibility of capitalism, this section explores the possibility that traditional values may play a *constructive* part in Korea's incredibly swift industrialization. This is not the first time this argument has been made, however it does go against mainstream western logic and defies Weber's well-regarded theory:

While many aspects of these societies superficially look like our own, beneath the surface the Dragons defy virtually all the basic Western theories about how capitalist development takes place, and what its requirements are. Indeed, my research indicates that an integral set of cultural factors – ones that Max Weber, perhaps our leading theorist of capitalist development, pinpointed as *preventing* capitalism from taking root – in fact substantially accounts for its burgeoning in the Little Dragons. (Goodell, 1995, p. 67)

A basic background of Korea's industrialization is also necessary in order to provide some context for this particular case. In this way, we are not only looking at how modernization affects values but also how values affect modernization.

To reiterate, Korea has modernized (industrialized) faster than any other nation – ever. What took the United States to achieve in one hundred years, took Korea – later on – only thirty (Kim, 1992, p. 6). Most scholars agree that as a peninsula that is geopolitically strategic and therefore attractive to foreign invaders, Korea's history of adversity clearly played a part in its speed and fervour to industrialize. Other explanations also abound for this:

A government with a well-defined industrial plan [...], a well-educated, disciplined work force [...], Japanese influence during the colonial era [...], the exploitation of workers [...], and the borrowing of foreign technology, (given its relatively late industrialization period). (Kim, 1992, pp. 6-7)

Although a painful subject, the annexation of Korea by Japan had a major influence on the later growth of the country. The Japanese established a centralized state government that was more powerful than before and promoted industrialization by providing incentives to industrialists – both Korean and Japanese (Janelli, 1993, p. 68-69). While most of the leadership and power of these initiatives benefited the Japanese, they laid the groundwork in providing the knowledge, infrastructure and frameworks for continuing development and industry when eventual independence took place.

Under the auspices of President Park Chung Hee beginning in 1964, an appeal went out to Koreans: “‘*We can do*’ became a household phrase. Perhaps the Korean social condition was ready to take off in economic growth: the timing must have been right” (Kim, 1992, p. 19). Korea was poised to take off. The *hahn* that was inside the minds and hearts of the Korean people, together with “official” nationalism and an

authoritative government reviving Confucian values such as self-sacrifice provided the drive and *intensity* with which the Korean people worked in order to achieve what they did in so short of a time.

Choon Soon Kim (1992) echoes this argument by saying that by contending that the borrowing of Chinese cultural traits, particularly Confucianism, has been constructive. Kim finds that the Confucian ethic permeates every facet of society and in her ethnography of Poongsan industry, finds it pervasive in Korean industrial relations.

Second, Kim also sees colonization as a source of *hahn* and cultural nationalism as another major influence. Kim shows that even early attempts and successes at colonization, especially by Japan beginning in 1910, brought about a strong sense of cultural nationalism in reaction to the loss of autonomy, dignity and lives of Koreans.²⁶ This intensity in cultural nationalism has been acted out in various ways including intensive educational enrolment,²⁷ It has also been acted out in the mobilization of the masses into a five-year economic plan in the 1960s and for the individual and mass belief that entrepreneurial activities and worker contributions were viewed in terms of nation-building (ibid, p. 19). As a reaction against Korea's history of oppression and adversity, and the collective desire to not have history repeat itself, came the blossoming of a unique form of Confucian ethics that is traditional yet compatible – even catalytic for development.

The tremendous economic growth of the region has been fuelled in part by the language of loyalty and obligations, where workers and citizens are called to sacrifice for the good of the company or the state. (Oldstone-Moore, 2002, p. 102)

²⁶ The brutality of the Japanese occupation which includes the conscription of over 700,000 Koreans in WWII, thousands of Korean women taken into sexual slavery known as “comfort women” to Japanese soldiers and the total loss of freedom of education contributed to the strengthening of Korean nationalism that endures today.

²⁷ Secondary school enrollment increased more than 28 times from when colonial rule ended in 1945 to 1986 and enrollment in colleges and universities increased to 150 times during the same period.

This result appears paradoxical: Korea is a society that is steadfast in preserving its identity and values in “traditional” terms, in part as a reaction to past threats and hardships, which is actually *acted out* in ways that result in the intense development and capitalization of the country. The above seeming paradox is manifested in other areas of society, a few are discussed below, and they often relate to the Confucian ethical system.

Chaebol

In relation to Korea’s industrialization, a more specific example of the traditional value system as being compatible, if not responsible, for growth is the *chaebol* business structure.

Korea has managed to become a global yet independent player through various government campaigns and strategies that were aimed specifically to catch up with the rest of the world. One of the most well known ways this has been achieved is via the *chaebol* system (*chaebol*, meaning “business association”). This is represented by Korea’s giant companies such as Samsung and Hyundai. These companies that mostly started as small family businesses were, in the 1950s and 60s, under the protectorate and support of the government. They were essentially the engines of the Korean economy. These businesses infiltrated almost every aspect of Korean life and to a great extent still do.²⁸ Although these giants have seen their share of scandal and corruption given their protected status and suffered greatly when they were forced to regulate after the 1997 economic crisis, they are still major influences in many aspects of people’s lives. The *chaebol* businesses are also often criticized for being insular and non-transparent. What makes them unique is their sole Korean ownership and structure. Although they are some

²⁸ LG, for example, has apartments, gas stations, electronics, properties and more. Lotte also owns what seems to be everything from apartment buildings to department stores to candy.

of the world's biggest exporters and behave like multinationals, they are in fact national, and a source of great pride, and they generate a huge income for the country.

As the primary subject of *Making Capitalism* (Janelli, 1993), Janelli argues that the existing literature in the social sciences is biased in portraying the structure and organization of *chaebol* companies as overly "traditional" (p. 20). He does not negate traditional roots completely given that his primary argument is that capitalism is culturally constructed, but he does show that there are actually many instances of resistance to authority and egalitarianism, which one would not expect under a more traditional Confucian structure. In addition, Janelli's argument is in line with Hobsbawm's invention of tradition theory in that he recognizes that many of the things that are deemed as "traditional" are invented and/or survivals from Japanese cultural influences.

Education

"Don't even step on the shadow of your teacher', an old saying goes" (KOIS, 2003, p. 334).

While the educational structure and system of today's Korea is a far cry from the Confucian scholar tradition of the Choseon Dyansty *seonbi*, the emphasis on memorization and examinations harks back to Confucian-style education and is still considered a very important social-status marker. "Confucius is revered as the first teacher, and his followers throughout the centuries have made education a high priority" (Oldstone-Moore, 2002, p. 99).

The Confucian emphasis on learning and competitive examination as a means of social achievement has long motivated the Koreans to pursue scholarly and educational endeavors, which are crucial to the acquisition

and diffusion of knowledge – skills indispensable to development.
(Perkins, 1986, p. 7)

The importance of establishing social rank by way of qualifications rather than by wealth is echoed by Weber (Weber, 1968, p. 107), and this difference is interpreted as a hindrance when it comes to the accumulation of wealth.

Korea has been active in the development of its education system for centuries. Beginning with Confucian academies, dating back to the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BC – 668 AD) to train aristocratic boys for government positions and elementary-level village study halls proliferated for commoners throughout the country. In the late 19th century modern schools were established and even in 1895, nationalistic undertones were present with King Gojong emphasizing education as an “indispensable instrument for fostering national leaders and achieving national prosperity” (KOIS, 2003, p. 335).

As discussed earlier, the strong emphasis on education by rote and an intensive examination process is derivative of the Confucian system for raising one’s social status. “By passing a series of difficult academic examinations [...] one could attain power, status, and wealth as a government official.” In this way, the Confucian system was unique in that “education, rather than armed force, was the principal means to rise in society” (Inglehart, 1990, p. 61).

Under the Japanese educational resources were built upon, but policy provided an education that was oriented toward indoctrination and assimilation, and suppressed Korean history and culture. In typical Korean spirit, this created an even more intense desire to educate their people on their own terms.

This fervour continues today and is manifested in the high-stress examination period that determines university possibilities for students, in the strong competition for

entrance into prestigious schools and also in today's obsession with the cram schools known as *hagwon*. Mentioned earlier, many young students go to several *hagwon* each week for everything including English, *tae kwon do*, music and math – sometimes not returning home in the evenings until past 10 p.m. The numbers who attend *hagwon* is also a manifestation of Korean-style competition and extremism in that children have little free time, rarely see their parents, don't get much sleep and have trouble getting their regular homework completed. It is well recognized that education is the path to success and security for the entire family, yet is often an enormous personal cost for a child and economic cost for a parent.

Segyehwa

The term *seggyehwa* is the official term for "globalization." "This phrase in Korea evokes strong nationalist sentiment, calling for national unity in order to survive and gain leadership in the international community" (Park, 1996, page n/a). Korean-style competition is also seen in *seggyehwa* in that it focuses on leading the way for others to reach for – rather than creating a lonely monopoly. A fierce struggle to maintain *at least* the status of major player is always in motion where falling behind is worse than anything, and where getting too far ahead is isolating. As a developed nation, Korea's *seggyehwa* drive is also about projecting a specific and positive image of Korea to other nations.

Shin Gi-Wook (2003), provides the example of an experimental school that emphasizes and encourages the development of a strong national identity in Korean students: all in the English language. This example shows this seeming paradox in an exemplary way: Wouldn't Korean language learning be a part of the development of a

nationalistic identity in a school that specifically teaches kids to be Korea's future leaders? Shin examines the two seemingly paradoxical trends – globalization and nationalism – in two lights: One, a stronger sense of nationalism as a reaction to globalization, and two, the globalization process has been appropriated as a nationalistic movement. In this sense, globalization has been interpreted in uniquely Korean terms as *segyehwa*. This personalization of a vigorous globalization policy in Korea is successful in preserving nationalistic tendencies, maintains tradition, culture and national identity in its context while joining a globalizing world.

Sanopboguk

On a more local level, the strategies in place that help resolve the seeming conflict between traditional values and modern competitive business practices also exist. One way this is done is through the philosophy of *sanopboguk*, which means to serve one's country by running or contributing to a successful business. This is observed in the intensity with which people embrace their work. One finds waiters literally running to your table to serve, people everywhere waiting to provide help and information (barring the language barrier) and never will you be brushed off by someone who feels it is not their job to answer your request. Service in Korea is phenomenal - from doctors offices to department stores, one is well taken care of in most situations. *Sanopboguk* can be seen in the normal workplace on a regular basis, yet it also manages to translate on an international level in that many businesses are now international in scope.²⁹

²⁹ For example, when I had a porcelain crown made at the dentist in Busan, the dentist made the tooth impression four times before she was satisfied. Then, when I went in for the crown fitting she was dissatisfied with the colour match and did another impression for an entirely new crown (extra cost absorbed by them). I was not overly concerned about the situation yet the dentist insisted on redoing it anyway. In a subsequent appointment, she revealed to me that knowing that I would be returning to Canada soon, she wanted Canadian dentists to see her work and form

Sanopboguk also incorporates the traditional in the way that it is intimately linked with the values of group fidelity, loyalty, self-sacrifice and dedication that are often manifested in work-time rituals to motivate and keep the group working as a collective. For example, in E-Mart – the Korean equivalent of Wal-Mart - you can witness several times a day, a ritualized chant by all the employees reciting, in unison, their dedication to the customer - all guided by a pre-recorded leader on the loudspeaker. At varied intervals during the day every employee in the store stands, faces the customers, recites their vows and they bow, and then resumes work as usual. This work ethic and service is squarely in line with Korea's cultural nationalism (Kim, 1992) and integrates traditional elements as well.

In this way, the roots of economic success are at least in part based on long-standing, existing values of a Confucian-based historic past, the collective reaction - manifested through *choong* – against colonial power and oppression and the impact of fratricidal war. In addition, the balance between preserving Korean identity while joining a globalized world can be achieved through the preservation and/or reinvention of various practices. Choong Soon Kim shows how modern industrial practices are intermingled with the traditional value system of Korea (Kim, 1992). Her fieldwork inside the copper producer of Poongsan Industries, sheds light on modern business and work practices that refer to traditional values – even within the modern setting.

the opinion that Korean dentistry was of the highest quality. It turned out that her intentions were nationalistic in nature with an international scope. It was worth the extra cost and time to her because I was more than just a patient – I had become a type of honorary dentistry ambassador. At the same time, she was ensuring a strong position within the international dentistry sphere.

She comments on the impact of Confucianism on the organizational structure of the company and she found that rules for leave were dependent on the extended family's needs – such as marriages and deaths. For example, a certain number of days leave were granted for the death of close kin such as parents or spouse, whereas fewer days leave are granted for family members of greater *chon* (distance), such as for the death of an in-law. She found that there were no specified leave days for female workers.

Indeed, the impact of Confucianism is profound, and it covers a wide array of characteristics in the organizational structure of Poongsan [...] the role of the founder in the hiring and promotion of kin members creates a dual system or organization at Poongsan [...] Moreover, Poongsan's special training for middle management takes place at a Confucian academy [...] Despite young worker's resentment of authoritarian rules, they remain faithful to the Confucian hierarchical order. (Kim, 1992, p. 205)

It is important here to acknowledge that Kim, unlike Janelli (1993) does appear to be partial toward the basic argument that traditionalism is alive and well within the corporate organization. It is easy to state that certain actions or behaviours are “Confucian”. It should also be acknowledged that “an urban and institutional culture also now belongs to South Korea” (Janelli, 1993, p. 43). This is what makes Hobsbawm & Ranger's (1983) arguments so compelling in relation to this study and supports the concluding discussion on the usefulness of the terms “modern” and “traditional” within this context.

While Kim's partiality is present she also finds that Poongsan firm's industrial culture is characterized by the coexistence of the traditional and the modern (Kim, 1992). However, she too finds that the popular dichotomization by the social sciences between tradition and modernity is not entirely valid in that they are difficult to define within this context. Kim also discussed tradition in terms of being somewhat mythical and states that “...Confucianism may mean different things to different Koreans” (Kim, 1992, p. 5).

Kim shows that the meanings of terms vary depending on a person's political ideology and generation.

The examples provided here of *sanopboguk*, *chaebol*, *segyehwa* and the intense participation in the education system have the following in common:

- They all contribute to the economic wealth of the country;
- They all integrate the “traditional” (reinvented or otherwise) in terms of core Korean values and customs;
- They are nationalistic in nature;
- They are an expression of orthodoxy, in terms of the fact that they are unique interpretations of things that are common to other modernized countries;
- They resolve (or render irrelevant) the perceived tension between the *modern* and the *traditional*.

All of the above points are aspects of and help to complete the definition of *Koreanness*. This term is elaborated upon out of necessity since the Korean situation is complex and confronts one with seeming paradoxes that require explanation. Since existing terms defy a proper interpretation of the situation, *Koreanness* is elaborated upon.

In summary, the existence of *chaebol*, the emphasis on education, *segyehwa* and *sanopboguk* provide evidence that traditionally-based structures, reinvented to conform to a modern setting can play a productive role in the development of capitalism and the economic success of a country. These unique structures within Korean society are all compatible with and employ defining elements of *Koreanness*.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

MODERN VS. TRADITIONAL

Discussions on value categories as being either modern or traditional assume a polar opposition. This thesis found that tradition is not necessarily old and that modern is not necessarily new. Although values are changing and may involve a slower generational element as Inglehart professes, to examine Korean values from a perspective that is partial to a “replacement” proves less useful. In this attempt to overcome the polarizing of terms, it has been shown that “modern” is not necessarily replacing the “traditional”. Discussion within this thesis shows that this is not necessarily useful to the examination of a society. This idea is in concurrence with Kim (1992), Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), Shils (1981, 1971), Inglehart & Baker (2003, 2000), and calls for an exploration and discussion into a new way of discussing these terms. Through the examination of so-called traditional and modern values, it has been found that Korea flourishes in an intermingling of the two, and both reinvented. This ongoing theoretical debate between the old and new can also be seen in a different light, where the modern world is not necessarily in opposition to the not-so modern:

The modern world presents itself, on the surface, as that which, and tends to push rationalization to its limit, and because of this, it allows itself to despise – or to consider with respectful curiosity – the bizarre customs, inventions and imaginary representations of previous societies. Paradoxically, however, despite or rather due to this extreme ‘rationalization’, the life of the modern world is just as dependent on the imaginary as any archaic or historical culture. (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 156)

Castoriadis argues that lines drawn to separate modern and traditional are not clear, in fact they are relative terms. Something does not have to be old to be traditional

and in the Korean case at least, traditional also refers to the *consensus* that something is traditional and therefore meaningful.

Reality exists only to the extent that it is recorded; ultimately truth is nothing [...] it lives, essentially, in a universe of symbols that, most of the time, neither represent the real nor are necessary to conceive of it or manipulate it. (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 159)

What is less clear, however, is how this consensus is achieved. In the Korean case, one could argue that it depends on how it contributes in a meaningful way to *Koreanness*.

“Invented traditions” are not arbitrary; they are embraced because they are meaningful. What is meaningful to a culture is highly specific and can be seriously influenced by experience. Meaning can be created from such influences even if they are not “original” to the specific culture. Confucian values are the greatest example of this. If the reference of a new tradition contributes to the collective security, livelihood, success, and outlook of a society it can be adapted. In this way *Koreanness* also takes into account the importance of this history and especially effects and outcomes that have resulted.

KOREANNESS

The traditionally-based core values that were explored included orthodoxy, equality, *hahn* and *choong* were found to be of relevance in Korean society today. The presence of these uniquely adapted values, rooted in both Confuciansim and nationalism in contemporary Korean society provide the basis for the elaboration of *Koreanness*. *Koreanness*, as Korea’s unique form of Confucianism, historically refers to a period of peace, the Choseon dynasty, which exemplifies the height of Confucianism in Korea, and is revered as a type of renaissance period. It is also exemplified by the collective intensity to which many actions are taken, and can be seen in many areas of society, including

“Education Fever”, the manner in which school children are educated, the incredibly high number of working hours and the strong commitment to self-sacrifice.

Koreanness incorporates the particular “reinvention” of traditional values and norms to accommodate Korea’s specific cultural history and need to compete in the global marketplace; it also integrates nationalism, intensity of spirit, and *hahn* as motivators. These are what allow for a so-called “flexible” Confucianism, thus resolving certain paradoxes of Korean society. *Koreanness* also entails the active preservation (internally) and creation of awareness (externally) of that which is uniquely Korean. Although this seems to support the theory of divergence, which implies the revival of traditions, in this case, the traditional values are both referenced to the past and are renewed at the same time. Whatever is deemed as traditional *is* traditional, as long as it conforms to the idea of *choong* – orthodoxy and fairness for everyone. In this way neither divergence nor convergence theories satisfy all conditions.

The intensity of spirit and orthodoxy that exemplifies the Korean spirit, together with the particular form of competition that stays true to Confucian values makes for a highly driven society that accepts change in sometimes dramatic ways, yet in uniquely Korean terms. *Koreanness* would be seen by Max Weber as a paradox in that it describes a society whereby values based on traditions and orthodoxy are catalysts for change and economic success. Weber’s primary assumption that traditionalism is not compatible with capitalism is inherently flawed in this way, based on the above support but also in its assumption of a polarization between the terms *modern* and *traditional*.

WEBER AND BEYOND

This thesis has asked whether Confucian values are conducive or counterproductive to the modernization / capitalization of South Korea through the examination of the primary argument in Max Weber's *The Religion of China*. In contrast to Weber's theory, it has been found that to a degree, Korea's particular interpretation or brand of Confucianism, as "invented" traditions and values that are closely tied to nationalism, have actually been motivators in the country's intense economic development, especially in post-war times, and continues to be a major influence in many areas of life. Korea's particular brand of Confucianism is *also* its own particular brand of capitalism. They are inextricable – and can no longer be definable in classic terms. "Every capitalist system, and for that matter, every political economy, is a unique human creation that is socially constructed and culturally informed" (Janelli, 1993, p. 235).

The stress of the transition falls upon the whole culture: resistance to change and assent to change arise from the whole culture. (E.P. Thompson cited in Janelli, 1993, p. 232)

[...] The transformation of preexisting modes of production has seldom been a smooth unidirectional process (Meillassoux 1972, cited in Janelli 1993, p. 232) [...] far from sweeping all before it, and replacing indigenous cultural forms with its own social and ideological structures, the advancing capitalist system has clearly been determined, in significant respects, by the local systems it has sought to engulf. (Foster-Carter, 1978; Marks and Rathbone, 1992 and Comaroff, 1985, cited in Janelli, 1993, p. 232)

In terms of identifying the particular values that are enduring or changing, the interviews revealed results whereby there was evidence of value change surrounding topics of free speech and respect, as well as surrounding those of leisure and quality of life.

In general, value categories that were directly related to the five basic relationships and the five cardinal virtues were still of importance to participants. The

most important of relationships within the traditional value category were related to kinship. *Hahn* was also important on an individual level rather than on a collective one, while the literature discusses the term on a collective level. Modern values such as free speech and individualism were discussed in terms of being “imports”. Free speech was linked to personal freedoms, however with limitations, and individualism was mostly viewed as a negative thing that could isolate one from the rest of society.

Readings also provide further evidence that traditional themes of rank and harmony (Janelli, 1993, p. 6) are highly observable and that the emphasis on education as a Confucian “survival” are important today. In addition, the focus on the group rather than the individual, a “catch-up” style of competition, and a primary focus on family, including to some degree veneration of elders, have been echoed by others throughout this thesis.

Despite these so-called “survivals”, it has also been found that Korea’s brand of Confucianism is not the Confucianism of Weber’s time. Korea’s values and traditions are reinvented but they are nonetheless rooted in various facets and influences in history and in the Confucian tradition.

Capitalism can develop in the absence of a Protestant ethical background. However, in the case of Korea, it did not arise without the reinvention of tradition and subsequent changing values in a vastly changing country. It would be remiss to say that a nation that has seen such upheaval has not changed in a myriad of ways – especially in the area of basic values.

One is left with two answers to the initial argument that traditionalism impedes the development of capitalism:

1) That Weber is incorrect, at least in this case, whereby traditionalism of the Korean type has been found to be catalytic for development rather than detrimental; 2) That since the type of traditionalism is not that of Weber's view of it, one has to ask whether the question still applies. The way in which one defines the concept *traditional*, and by association the concept of *modern*, provides further fuel to the debates.

What is revealed is that Weber is absolutely right in that basic values of ethical or philosophical origin, influence the nature of socio-economic development. However, it is also revealed that capitalism is not uniformly constructed and that values need not be rooted in a specific ethical tradition for economic success.

This thesis has shown that a Protestant ethical background is not a prerequisite for economic success; it has shown that another ethical system can be just as conducive to capitalism and growth. Through the examination of important or core values of Korea today, it has been revealed how Korean values and traditions have been reinvented in a way that actually promote growth, thus addressing questions raised by Max Weber. Traditionalism is alive and well in Korea, it is what traditionalism *means* and how it is *manifested* in society is at the heart of the matter in resolving the paradox of Korean success. What appears to be the perseverance of old customs and beliefs, are in effect the driving force for economic growth and national unity. What has been uncovered is a country that has changed and grown on its own unique terms. Max Weber would surely find Korea a fascinating terrain to revisit his theories.

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ANNEX 1: Ethics Approval Certificates



Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

Service de subventions de recherche et d'éthologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

August 17, 2005

Diane Pacom
Department of Sociology
550 Cumberland Ave (TBT 389)
INTRA

Jennifer Fletcher

Re: Examining Korean Values Among Two generations: Beyond the Modern and Traditional (File # 06-05-16)

Dear Professor Pacom and Ms. Fletcher,

Thank you for your response to the REB's concerns regarding your project. You will find enclosed the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (SSH REB) Certification for your research project.

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms may not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must also promptly report to the REB all adverse events or experiences encountered by participants.

This certificate of ethical clearance is valid until August 17, 2006. Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer in August 2006 to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at:
http://www.uottawa.ca/services/research/rge/rebs/eng/application_dwn.html.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at extension 1787.

Sincerely yours,

Catherine Paquet
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Richard Clément, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

550, rue Cumberland 550 Cumberland Street
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

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Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (SSH REB) has examined the application for ethical approval for the research project **Examining Korean Values Among Two generations: Beyond the Modern and Traditional (File # 06-05-16)** submitted by Jennifer Fletcher and supervised by Diane Pacom of the Department of Sociology. The members of the REB found that the research project met appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and in the Procedures of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, and accordingly gave the research project a Category Ia (Approval).

This certification is valid for one year from the date indicated below.

Catherine Paquet
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For the Chair of the SSH REB
Richard Clément

August 17, 2005

Date

550, rue Cumberland Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada 550 Cumberland Street Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

(613) 562-5841 • Téléc./Fax: (613) 562-5338
<http://www.uottawa.ca/services/research/tege/index.html>



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Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie | Research Grants and Ethics Services

September 26, 2006

Diane Pacom
Department of Sociology and
Anthropology
University of Ottawa
550 Cumberland, room 389
INTRA

Jennifer Fletcher

**RE: Examining Korean Values Among Two Generations: Beyond the Modern and
Traditional (File # 06-05-16)**

Dear Professor Pacom and Ms. Fletcher,

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee has accepted your request for extension of ethics approval of the above mentioned project. You will therefore find enclosed the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board Certification extension for your research project.

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms may not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must also promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

This extension is **valid from August 17, 2006 until August 17, 2007**. Please submit an Annual Status Report to the Protocol Officer in August 2007 to either close the file or request a renewal of approval. This document can be found at:
http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at extension 1787.

Sincerely yours,

Catherine Paquet
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa
Service de subventions de recherche et deontologie | Research Grants and Ethics Services

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has examined the application for extension of ethics approval for the research project **Examining Korean Values Among Two Generations: Beyond the Modern and Traditional (File # 06-05-16)** submitted by Jennifer Fletcher and supervised by Diane Pacom of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The Social Sciences and Humanities REB found that the project met appropriate ethical standards set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and in the Procedures of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, and granted initial ethics approval to the project on August 17, 2005.

This ethics renewal certification is valid for one year from the date indicated below.

Catherine Paquet
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Richard Clément, Chair of the SSH REB

August 17, 2006
Date

ANNEX 2: Interview questions

Questionnaire

Category 1: "Universals"

What does family mean to you? (or, what is your general opinion about...?)

What does religion mean to you?

What does work mean to you?

What does marriage mean to you?

범주 1: "보편적" 가치관

당신에게 가족이란 어떤 의미입니까? (또는 가족에 대해 당신이 지니고 있는 일반적인 견해는 무엇입니까?)

당신에게 종교란 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 일이란 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 결혼이란 어떤 의미입니까?

Category 2: "Traditional" Korean values

What does Confucianism mean to you?

What does loyalty mean to you?

What does *Hahn* mean to you?

What does respect mean to you?

범주 2: "전통적" 한국 가치관

당신에게 유교는 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 충성심은 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 한(恨)은 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 존경은 어떤 의미입니까?

Category 3: "Modern" values

What does free speech mean to you?

What does equality (between the sexes for example) mean to you?

What does individualism mean to you?

What does work/life balance (leisure) mean to you?

범주 3: "현대적" 가치관

당신에게 언론의 자유는 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 평등 (가령 남녀 평등)은 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 개인주의는 어떤 의미입니까?

당신에게 일과 인생의 조화 (여가)는 어떤 의미입니까?