

## Western Influences on Young Women's Fashion in South Korea in the 1970s

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### Abstract

*The purposes of this study were to examine young women's fashion and their values in South Korea in the 1970s and to explore the dynamics of how the changes in values affected fashion. Fifteen Korean women who were college students in the 1970s were interviewed. With industrialization and acculturation to Western customs in the 1970s, Korean women's fashion reflected the permeation of new ideas and behaviors into the culture. New ideas of "pursuing a career" or "gaining professional success" rooted in the women's movement were most important and were reflected in the prevalence of casual and comfortable styles. However, "having a good husband and being a good wife" was also important. In addition to the transition in gender roles, Korea was fast moving from a collectivist to an individualistic society and underwent the process of melding traditional and newly-adopted values in their acculturation to the West. This study helps us better understand Korea's acculturation process through dress and the dynamics involved between fashion and value changes.*

*Key words : acculturation, cultural values, South Korea, the 1970s, young women's fashion.*

### I . Introduction

Internationalism and liberalization strengthened many cultural ties between Western and Eastern nations by the 1970s. As Western influences spread throughout the world, the South Korean (hereafter referred to as Korean) lifestyles and social concepts underwent rapid changes. This was especially the case with women's fashion. The Korean public began to adopt Western

dress in the 1950s, and over the next two decades, European and American fashion gradually replaced traditional dress. By the 1970s, young women in Korea no longer wore traditional dress on campus, at work, or at home, and with the exception of rural areas, even older women adopted Western styles.<sup>1)</sup> The 1970s were a relatively stable and affluent period in Korea. The government focused primarily on social modernization following the success of economic development projects in the 1960s.<sup>2)</sup> Growing afflu-

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<sup>1</sup> H. Lim, "Continuing and changes of development values in Korea," *Korea Journal* 15-10 (1975): 38-43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

ence coupled with international media coverage and increasing travel opportunity enabled young people to rapidly learn about and adopt Western fashion. Traditional dress remained in use only for special occasions such as *Seolnal* (New Year's Day), *Chuseok* (Thanksgiving Day), or wedding ceremonies.

Historical research on 1970s fashion has been primarily analyses of fashion magazines. We examine the styles adopted by college females and their behaviors concerning dress during that period, since there may be a gap between the styles presented in the magazines and those actually worn by women. The purposes of our study were first, to document the fashion adopted by young women in Korea in the 1970s; second, to examine young women's values in the decade with a focus on Western influence; and third, to explore the dynamics of how the changes in values affected fashion. Making a connection between changes in cultural values and fashion will help us to better understand Korea's acculturation process through dress as well as provide insight into the dynamics involved between fashion and value changes.

## Review of Literature

### 1. Acculturation

Acculturation as a process of cultural change has a variety of definitions. According to Gorden, acculturation is to experience aspects of a different culture and incorporate elements of them into one's own culture.<sup>3</sup> Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits argue that acculturation occurs when one group undergoes a drastic alteration in the

direction of conformity to another group through the borrowing of ideas, behaviors, or artifacts.<sup>4</sup> Such contact can involve the loss of certain cultural traits of one's own. For Tamura, acculturation is the adaptation of a group to specifically American middle-class norms.<sup>5</sup> For him, the rapid and massive changes that occurred within separate countries throughout the world, accompanied by the spread of Western culture, resulted in various forms of acculturation.

Unlike Gorden's definition, Redfield et al. and Tamura view the process of acculturation or conformity as one way. Tamura in particular explored the Eastern conformity to American middle-class norms along with the spread of Western culture. It is probably a more realistic point of view that acculturation is in most cases inflicted upon the East from the West rather than vice versa; hence, world culture has been primarily dominated by Western entities.

### 2. Changes in Cultural Values in Korea in the 1970s

The Korean economy, despite international stagnation, grew steadily in the 1970s. Korea laid out a foundation of stability and order, and modernization and social development became the major concerns of the government.<sup>6</sup> The development of science and technology brought industrialization, urbanization, and population growth, and with this came an increase in mass media. The shift in Korean public values during this period was remarkable. With materialism making money and success the focus of many people's lives, individualism prevailed.<sup>7</sup> Hui referred to individualism as the tendency to be most con-

<sup>3</sup> M. Gorden, *Assimilation in american life: the role of race, religion, and national origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 24.

<sup>4</sup> R. Redfield, R. Linton, and M. Herskovits, "Memorandum on the study of acculturation," *American Anthropologist* 38 (1936): 149-152.

<sup>5</sup> E. H. Tamura, *Americanization, acculturation, and ethnic identity* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> C. H. Park, *Korean Reborn: A model for development* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1979), 22.

<sup>7</sup> H. Lim, *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

cerned with one's own interests, needs, and goals.<sup>8)</sup> It emphasizes self-reliance and independence, competition, competence, and equality.<sup>9)</sup> However, collectivist ideals still deeply rooted in Korean culture that emphasized people's concern with group interests, needs, and goals, conflicted with the newly-adopted individualistic values.<sup>10)</sup> Koreans still had a sense of involvement in others' lives, were concerned with how their decisions would affect others, and showed a willingness to accept the opinions and views of others.<sup>11)</sup>

With the new structural changes of industrialism and materialism in society, women gradually took on more important roles in the work force.<sup>12)</sup> Under the Confucian concept<sup>13)</sup> of traditional Korea, the education and social activities of women were restricted, and their role and status were seen as subordinate to men.<sup>14)</sup> During the 1970s, the average gap in education between males and females gradually narrowed, and people's perspectives of gender roles and the relationships between men and women changed.<sup>15)</sup> Nevertheless, inequality between the sexes remained.<sup>16)</sup>

Korea's adoption of Western ideas, behavior, and goods constituted a drastic form of acculturation. Naylor points out that in the process of acculturation material items and technical processes are more readily borrowed than abstract concepts.<sup>17)</sup> Likewise, while Western thought conflicted with deeply-rooted Korean traditions, change was gradually negotiated, and new fashion became more widely adopted. The Westernization of Korean dress generally moved more quickly in men's clothing styles, in urban areas, among the upper class, among more highly educated people, and among the youth. Blumer suggests that one function of fashion is a mechanism for socializing individuals or groups to change.<sup>18)</sup> In the 1970s, as Korean culture made its transition from traditional to modern values, the adoption of Western dress may have played a significant role in the adjustment of the changing social climate.<sup>19)</sup>

## Methods

We adopted a qualitative approach for this

<sup>8</sup> C. H. Hui "Measurement of individualism-collectivism," *Journal of Research on Personality* 22 (1988): 17-36.

<sup>9</sup> R. N. Bellah, R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, and S. M. Tipton, *Habits of the heart: individualism and commitment in american life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 46.

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Hui, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> C. H. Hui, and H. Trandis, "Individualism-collectivism: A study of cross-cultural researchers," *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology* 17 (1986): 222-248.

<sup>12</sup> S. Park, P. C. Warner, and T. K. Fitzgerald, "The process of westernization: Adoption of western-style dress by Korean women, 1945-62," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 11-13 (1993): 39-47.

<sup>13</sup> Confucianism is a philosophy of social order. Women obey three people during their lives: their fathers in the first stage, their husbands when they are married, and their sons when they are widowed.

<sup>14</sup> H. C. Koh, "Women's contributions to Korean culture," *Korean Culture* 8-3 (1987): 34-43.

<sup>15</sup> P. Hasan, and D. C. Rao, *Korea: Policy, Issues for long-term development* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 77.

<sup>16</sup> M. Y. Lee, Relationship of body image, acculturative stress, and self-esteem among Korean female college students, Unpublished Master's thesis, The Ohio State University, Columbus (1977), 47.

<sup>17</sup> L. L. Naylor, *Culture and change: An introduction* (Westport, CN: Bergin and Garvey, 1996), 32.

<sup>18</sup> H. Blumer, "Fashion: From class differentiation to collective selection," *Sociological Quarterly* 10 (1969), 282.

<sup>19</sup> M. J. Kim, Fashion Leadership as related to attitudes towards change and socioeconomic level among Korean college women. Unpublished Master's thesis, Oregon State University, Oregon (1978).

study. The 1970 through 1979 issues of the Korean magazines--1970~1975 and 1979 issues of *Yosungjungang* and 1976~1978 issues of *Elegance*--were examined as representations of young Korean women's magazines.<sup>20)</sup> Then, a set of stimuli was compiled to use during interviews.<sup>21)</sup> The stimulus set was shown after a respondent answered all the questions related to styles that they actually wore in the 1970s before answering value questions. The set was intended to remind the respondents if they had forgotten to mention any styles they wore at that time. Preliminary interviews were conducted, from which an interview schedule and the final stimulus set of 33 styles was developed. The main interview schedule consisted of two broad themes of fashion styles and cultural values and appearance with background questions. Each theme was then divided into sub-themes, and thirty-four questions were ultimately developed.

A convenience sample of fifteen women who attended college in the 1970s was selected and in-depth interviews were conducted about one to one-and-a-half hours in length. The women were asked to exhibit photographs or actual clothing items from the 1970s, and each interview was audio taped. Each interview was transcribed, and the primary researcher verified its accuracy.

The constant comparative method and open coding<sup>22)</sup> were adopted for the study. According to Strauss and Corbin,<sup>23)</sup> the constant comparative method promotes the yielding of patterns and themes in analyzing data. Broad themes were initially identified and refined; then, new themes were identified throughout the analysis. The

coded transcripts were first compared across respondents, then within each respondent in order to identify both cultural and individual themes. In order to verify the accuracy and reliability of the coding, one additional coder besides the primary researcher reviewed five transcripts. Discrepancies between the coders were negotiated and incorporated into the coding of the rest transcripts.

Background information of the respondents is provided in <Table 1>; the analysis refers to respondents by their designated number.

## Findings

In this section we present respondents' style choices, other people's responses to these styles, respondents' sources of fashion information, style conformity to peers, ideal styles, values held by young women, values conveyed through appearance, and impression management through appearance. Subsection titles in Findings section relate to interview questions.

### 1. Adopted Styles

Respondents were asked about the styles they wore for different occasions--class, dating, and formal occasions including accessories.

#### 1) Campus Wear

During the 1970s, the comfortable casual look (Fig. 1) coexisted with the feminine and formal looks (Fig. 2) on Korean college campuses. Ten respondents indicated that they alternated between the two looks. Four women said they

<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s there were no magazines in Korea with an exclusive fashion content. *Yosungjungang* and *Elegance* were the magazines that devoted the most space to fashion. *Elegance* concentrated on female college students while *Yosungjungang* targeted a wider age range. Even though it appeared in 1976 and was discontinued in 1978, *Elegance* was the best source for college women while it was published.

<sup>21</sup> Initially 40 styles that represented those that appeared most frequently in the magazines were selected. We assumed that there would be a gap between the styles presented in the magazines and what the respondents actually wore, so the focus was on styles that fit with college student lifestyles.

<sup>22</sup> According to A. Strauss, and J. Corbin, open coding is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" in their book *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), 61.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

〈Table 1〉 Background Information of Respondents

	Occupation	Home Town	College	Major	College Years	ES	FI	LF
K 1	Professor/education	Seoul	Ehwa Women's U, Seoul	Family & consumer sciences	68~72	u	a	y
K 2	Secretary/academy	Inchon	Hongik U, Seoul	Fine art	69~72	m	a	y
K 3	Professor/voice	Seoul	Yonsei U, Seoul	Voice	75~79	m	h	y
K 4	Instructor/violin	Seoul	Seoul National U, Seoul	Violin	75~79	m	h	y
K 5	Instructor/piano	Seoul	Kyonghee U, Seoul	Piano	75~79	m	a	y
K 6	Professor/piano	Seoul	Sookmyoung Women's U, Seoul	Piano	75~79	m	l	y
K 7	Instructor/flute	Seoul	Dankook U, Seoul	Flute	76~79	m	a	y
K 8	Dentist	Seoul	Jungang U, Seoul	Biology	76~79	m	h	y
K 9	Homemaker	Seoul	Sookmyoung Women's U, Seoul	German	76~80	m	a	y
K10	Nurse/homemaker	Seoul	Yonsei U, Seoul	Nursing	77~80	m	h/a	y
K11	Medical doctor	Seoul	Korea U, Seoul	Medicine	77~80	h	h	y
K12	Instructor/flute	Seoul	Danguk U, Seoul	Flute	77~81	m	a	y
K13	Teacher/junior high/music	Kyunggi	Kyonghee U, Seoul	Voice	78~82	u	h	n
K14	Homemaker	Seoul	Sudo Women's U, Seoul	Physical education	78~82	m	a	y
K15	Professor/nursing	Seoul	Seoul National U, Seoul	Nursing	78~83	m	l	y,n

\* ES: Family's Economic Status during college ⇒ u: upper middle, m: middle, lm: lower middle, l: low ; FI: Fashion Interest during college ⇒ h: highly interested, a: average, l: lower than average; LF: Living with Family during college ⇒ y: yes, n: no; U: University

wore skirts rather than pants or jeans most of the time. One of the four remembered that she did not wear jeans at all but did wear other pants. Conversely, one woman recalled she preferred jeans or other pants throughout most of her college years and rarely wore skirts.

According to one woman (K1), who went to

college from 1968 to 1972, the early 1970s were a transitional period for female college students' campus wear because it moved from a formal to a casual look. Bell-bottom jeans—a "hot" fashion item in the United States—gained popularity in Korea and remained in style until the mid 1970s, often worn with a tight-fitted y-shirt.<sup>24</sup> She recalled:

<sup>24</sup> In Korea, men's dress shirts were called y-shirts. Y-shirts for women were collared, tailored shirts similar to men's dress shirts but with a fitted waist. They were popular in the 1970s.



〈Fig. 1〉 Comfortable and casual look on campus (1976).

At that time, after I entered college in the late 60s, I wore formal dress. And then, jeans were very popular, and A-lined mini skirts were in fashion. So, I wore them with blouses. I tucked the blouse in the skirt ... When I was a freshman and sophomore in college, the mini was popular ... in my sophomore and junior years, it was very short, and I think it got longer afterwards. When it reached the extreme, it went up to 20 centimeter (7 1/8") from the knee although I didn't wear it that short... In the '70s skirts became longer, midi ... or about knee-length ... Jeans were bell-bottoms or straight. Very wide. Mostly bell-bottoms. Just swept around.

Later in the decade, straight jeans replaced bell-bottoms. Besides jeans, other comfortable

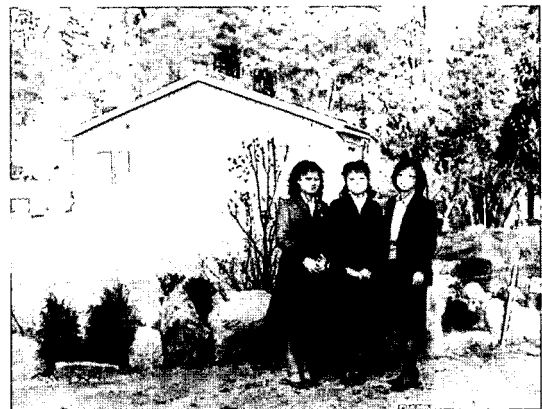
pants such as straight cotton pants were popular.

The respondents wore jeans mainly because they were "in fashion" rather than for their comfort or practicality. The tendency for Korean women to keep up with the latest trends suggests that they are a relatively fashion-conscious group, which coincides with the concept of collectivity; this was especially apparent when it came to conformity within the younger age groups. Most women wore jeans and other pants with more feminine tops such as fitted y-shirts because they still wanted to look stylish and feminine in jeans but not too casual whereas many American women wore jeans with casual boxy t-shirts.

Even though jeans in general were a widely-accepted adoption of American culture, certain variations such as hip-huggers did not catch on; this illustrates how traditional and conservative attitudes of Korean modesty still endured even in the wake of cultural change. This tension among Koreans was also apparent in the continuing dispute in the mass media over how much of the legs mini skirts revealed.

The more feminine or formal look of a skirt and a blouse with or without a jacket or a one-piece dress, was still widely prevalent on campuses. One woman (K4), who went to college from 1975 to 1979, recalled:

In class, I usually wore comfortable clothes. In Korea, comfortable wear was synonymous with campus wear at that time, but it



〈Fig. 2〉 Feminine and Formal look on campus (1978 on the left and 1977 on the right).

was not like wearing jeans for work. I wore pretty skirts, or even when I wore pants, I wore pretty pants ... for violinists, one-piece dresses were uncomfortable for playing, so we usually wore two-piece outfits. Two-pieces, a skirt and blouse, in different colors, sometimes with a vest. The skirts were usually A-line. Box-pleated skirts were popular ... At that time jeans were not imported like now and not as popular. They weren't made in our country ... So if we wanted to buy a pair of jeans, we had to go to Dokebi market<sup>25</sup> and bought used ones. So, there were some blue clothes produced in our country with different fabrics like cotton or linen ... We would have custom-made bell-bottoms.

Practicality (comfort) was still an important factor in her selection of campus wear, but her standard for comfort was different from most other respondents as suggested by her feminine choice of clothing. She seemed to view jeans as too casual and remarked that they were "not popular." Even though campus wear was more comfortable and casual than attire for other occasions, the degree of comfort and casualness depended on individual choices of styles for other occasions.

Silhouettes became wider in the later 1970s. Puff-sleeved jackets with wider shoulders and fuller skirts—flared or gathered—came into fashion even though A-line or box-pleated skirts still remained popular. Knitwear—sweaters, cardigans, skirts, and pants—was also in fashion, and sets were usually popular.

## 2) Dating Wear

Eight respondents dressed differently when they went on dates while seven did not. The

former answered that they wore a one-piece dress or a blouse and skirt, sometimes with a jacket or vest. Their goal was to look feminine (all of the eight women), prettier, neater, or to create a romantic image. Individuals are generally encouraged to construct their appearance to meet the social normative expectations in context-specific ways, and dating for many women most likely requires a self-presentation that embodies accepted notions of femininity.<sup>26</sup> This group of women probably had more traditional ideas of gender roles and was more conscious of how femininity was linked to beauty.<sup>27</sup> However, not everyone had the same notion of femininity. For example, one woman made an association between femininity and a dressy look while another woman connected femininity with softness.

## 3) Formal Wear

Clothes for formal occasions included a two-piece dress (seven women) and a neat one-piece dress (five), a masculine/angular tailored suit or jacket (four), pants suit (two), pants (two), a long skirt with blouse (one), and a one-piece dress and jacket ensemble (one). In the later 1970s, pantsuits became more accepted as formal wear. Formal wear was often associated with a tailored style—somewhat masculine—, femininity, or neatness. Some respondents had the idea that one-piece dresses generally looked more feminine than two-piece outfits, so they chose them to look more feminine for formal occasions. Long dresses were considered one of the most formal styles.

## 4) Accessories

Comfortable shoes were more acceptable than in the previous decade; however, dressy or for-

<sup>25</sup> The traditional gray market that sold imported goods was located in the Namdmoon traditional market.

<sup>26</sup> N. A. Rudd, and S. J. Lennon, "Body image and appearance-management behavior in college women," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 18-3 (2000): 152-162.

<sup>27</sup> N. A. Rudd, "Cosmetics consumption and use among women: Ritualized activities that construct and transform the self," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 11-12 (1997): 59-77.

mal shoes were still widely worn. The most popular styles were wedges (ten women), sandals (nine), pumps (eight), boots (six), and Land Rovers (five).<sup>28)</sup> Other styles mentioned were high heels, loafers, basketball shoes, and clogs. Wedges worn mostly with long bell-bottom jeans were popular throughout the decade whereas clogs—popular in America—did not really catch on<sup>1</sup> in Korea. Most women viewed them as too casual or too clumsy to wear in public, and this reflected the relative formality of Korean culture. Throughout most of the 1970s, carrying books in hands or arms (twelve women) without a book bag was a fashionable part of the dress code among female college students.

Twelve respondents wore jewelry: necklaces (twelve), earrings (five), rings (four), and bracelets (three). Until the 1970s, ear piercing was very rare in Korea. According to Confucianism, the body is handed down from the parents; therefore, it is precious and should be kept in its natural state with no part of it being injured or altered. The older generation in particular had a negative view toward ear piercing, and since respect for the family was still important among the younger generation, they refrained from doing it. The fear of pain was another incentive for keeping their lobes intact.

## 2. Responses to Adopted Styles

Respondents were asked, "What were others' responses to your styles?" Parental response to the fashion adopted by the fifteen women in the 1970s was positive (five women), negative (four), or none at all (seven). The positive responses included pretty, feminine, neat and clean, looks good on you, fits well, stylish, and good sense of design. The negative responses were that the mini skirts were too short, the bell-bottoms too wide, or the hairstyles too wild. Overall, femininity, modesty, neatness, and cleanliness were important evaluation criteria. One respondent (K5) recalled that in the late 1970s mini skirts that

were too short were legally prohibited and considered a misdemeanor offense:

In my time, the mini was not in fashion ... It was during my sister's time in the early 1970s. They were arrested for a misdemeanor due to their short skirts or long hair (in men's cases) ... This sister was a teacher and was scolded by the principal in her school because she wore miniskirts to school.

This again suggests how deeply rooted collectivism was in Korean society at this time.

## 3. Sources of Fashion Information

Respondents were asked, "What were your sources of fashion information for your choices of styles?" and "Why?" The sources included store displays (nine women), peer groups (seven), people on the street (four), sisters (two), television programs (two), magazines (two), designer's suggestions in custom-made shops (two), catalogues in custom-made shops (one), and celebrities (one). The respondents paid close attention to what was in the stores and what people were wearing on the street, which suggests that Korean women were fashion conscious. Since all of them remained at home while attending college (common in Korean culture) and had tight family bonds, they also relied on their sisters' input about fashion. Catalogues and designers' suggestions in custom-made shops point to the developmental stages of the fashion industry in Korea at that time. Even though ready-to-wear clothing existed in Korea in the early 1970s, it was not initially widely accepted because the quality did not measure up to custom-made clothing, and the prices were not much cheaper, so not much of a bargain. It was not until larger companies entered the market in the middle of the decade that ready-to-wear became more accepted.

## 4. Style Conformity to Peers

<sup>28)</sup> These casual and comfortable shoes with very low heels were equivalent to a Hush Puppy in America.



Respondents were asked, "Did you dress like your peers?" and were then asked why or why not? Although there were some nonconformists, most respondents (eleven) conformed to their peer group styles, stressing the cohesiveness of adolescent groups especially among females. Six respondents said that the major reason for conformity was that "I got along with similar friends." Other reasons were "chose styles in fashion" (four) and "appearance of ready-to-wear" (one).

### 5. Ideal Styles

Respondents were asked, "What was your ideal style?" and "Which woman represented your style?" Movies had a great impact on notions of style. The influx of Western fashion on Korean culture meant not only adopting items and styles but also incorporating the values and ideals of beauty and the female image. American movie stars such as Audrey Hepburn or Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* contributed greatly to notions of ideal style among Korean women. One woman recalled, "I liked a simple and neat style with not much decoration that looked dignified ... Audrey Hepburn wore this style in a movie." The adjectives that defined ideal styles of the respondents were "feminine," "simple," "neat," "graceful," "beautiful," "romantic," "cute," "modest," "dignified," and "slim."

### 6. Young Women's Values in the 1970s

Respondents were asked, "What values did young women hold in the 1970s?" and "Did you agree to those values?" The values held by the respondents in the 1970s are listed in <Table 2>.

"Pursuing a career" or "gaining professional success" were the most important values for young women who were influenced by the women's liberation movement in Western cultures at the time:

Both my friends and I studied very hard to get a job ... there were a lot of people who

<Table 2> Young Women's Values in Korea in the 1970s

Value dimension	Frequency
Pursuing career/professional success	6
Having a good husband/being a good wife and mother	5
Pursuit of freedom	2
Individuality	2
Participation in social movement	1
Complying to the rule/collectivity	1

tried to get a job ... we didn't pay much attention to other things. After graduation, I was going to study abroad ... so in college we had to get ready to study abroad with the thoughts that we were going to continue to study. (K5)

However, the fact that the numbers of the respondents who valued "pursuing a career/gaining professional success" and "having a good husband and being a good wife" only differed by one respondent illustrates how transitional a period this was between traditional and radical values. One woman (K2), a student from 1969 to 1972, remembered:

At that time there weren't a lot of female students who wanted to find a job. They all entered college in order to get married to a good man. There were a lot of female students who got married before they graduated ... I think our school<sup>29</sup> was particularly like that compared to other schools in that sense.

Along with women's liberation, industrialization also emphasized freedom and individuality and promised opportunity and choice. While America was dealing with the fallout of post-industrialism in the 1970s, Korea was in the midst of becoming an industrialized nation. The

<sup>29</sup> Fine arts school.

Western hippie sense of personal and cultural freedom became an important theme among Korean youths:

The latter part of President Park's reign was still a dictatorship in the '70s. People wanted to be free. So, everybody aspired to freedom and Western culture. They grew their hair long. Beatles culture was popular. Clothes also ... U.S. hippie culture was very popular so we copied it and tried to follow the trend. (K4)

Well, freedom I think ... For women, something like freeing oneself from tradition ... For example, women could smoke, they could drink ... like that. Those things were not familiar until our time. It was probably a challenge to the traditional culture. (K11)

Freedom could mean freedom from the governmental dictatorship or traditional ideas about women, but either way, women challenged traditional social expectations by imitating Western culture. As a result, conventional gender roles began to blur, and women started to enjoy things that had once been exclusive to men despite the continuing overall inequality between the sexes. With all the rapid social and cultural changes of the decade, collectivity as a traditional cultural value still prevailed though it conflicted with the individuality being introduced.

#### 7. Values Conveyed through Appearance

When asked, "Did you believe values were

conveyed through appearance?" and "If so, what kinds of values did you convey through your appearance?" most women (thirteen) believed that values were conveyed through fashion. Those who focused on their future careers based their wardrobe choices on practicality: "Well, I just liked the clothes that felt comfortable. I hated uncomfortable ones. I didn't have to look pretty to men; I had to practice, and I lived far from school, so I dressed comfortably."

One woman (K8) on the other hand strove for a modest, sincere, more or less subservient image that embodied the virtues of traditional Korean women:

I don't think I did so on purpose, but people around me, when I talk to my mother or my aunt, they would want me to be more feminine. So, I think I was influenced by them a lot in dressing more in a feminine style...

Social expectations shaped her clothing choices that were heavily influenced by the older generation's traditional ideas of gender roles.

#### 8. Impression Management through Appearance

When asked, "Did you try to manage your appearance to make a certain impression to others?" and "If so, what impression?" fourteen women consciously or unconsciously managed a certain image through their appearance. The images that respondents tried to construct through their appearance are grouped into three categories of values in <Table 3>. The values were

<Table 3> Images Tried to Construct through Appearance

Impression	Value
"to being indifferent to fashion due to focusing on studying," "smart and active," "simple"	Radical values: "pursuing career/professional success," "individuality" or "pursuit of freedom"
"feminine," "cute," "stylish," "modest," "sincere," "decent," "lofty"	Traditional values: "having a good husband/being a good wife and mother" or "complying to the rule/collectivity"
"neat and clean," "refined," "a good sense of design or artisticness"	Neutral

what the respondents mentioned in their answers to value questions.

"Neat and clean" can possibly fall not only into the category of neutral but also into that of traditional values because many respondents suggested an association between the two when answering certain questions during interviews. "Neat and clean" seemed to have a connection with traditional Korean women's image of being modest. "Sincere," "decent," and "lofty" described traditional Korean virtues of a good person.

### Discussion

In traditional Korean culture, the education and social activities of women were restricted, and their role and status were subordinate to men.<sup>30</sup> With industrialization and acculturation to Western customs in the 1970s, Korean women gradually took on more important roles in society, and in the process, fashion reflected the permeation of new ideas and behaviors into the culture. This study found significant evidence that values influenced women's fashion during this decade.

New ideas of "pursuing a career" or "gaining professional success" rooted in the women's movement were most important to Korean women in the decade and were reflected in the prevalence of casual and comfortable styles. There was an overall emphasis on practicality that spilled over to the wide acceptance of wearing pants, helping women to present themselves as more masculine. However, "having a good husband and being a good wife" was also important among many Koreans. In addition to the transition in gender roles, Korea was fast moving from a collectivist to an individualistic society and underwent the process of melding traditional and newly-adopted values in their acculturation to the West. This was reflected in the coexistence of comfortable casual styles and feminine and formal styles in women's fashion.

As Western ideas faced significant resistance,

Korean women were selective with the Western styles that they adopted. Items that fit easily into Korean culture were adopted faster while others met with more resistance. For example, modesty remained an important Korean value, so the more revealing styles from the West were not readily accepted. European fashion was as much an influence as American fashion on Korean women. *Yosungjungang* reported Paris' ready-to-wear collection every season, so Korean fashion's evolution was not entirely parallel to styles in the United States. Overall, Korean women's styles were more decorative in design lines and surface designs than American fashion. This may have resulted from Koreans combining European and American styles; European styles were, in general, more decorative.

In short, all aspects of culture are closely related to each other, and fashion reflects those values. In Korea, the women's movement was a dominant cultural value in the 1970s causing tension between traditional ideas of gender roles, and this was revealed in women's adoption of styles and behaviors.

### Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

This study of the fashion adopted by young women in Korea in the 1970s has two major implications to the area of textiles and clothing. First, the examination of fashion that was actually adopted by young women for different occasions in Korea in the 1970s has extended our historical knowledge of 1970s fashion. Particularly, exploring Korean women's adoption of Western fashion provides insight into the process of acculturation through dress. Second, the examination of values held by young women and the dynamics between value changes and fashion provides deeper insights into the cultural aspects of fashion.

Many respondents ( $n = 11$ ) in our study entered the field of education. The respondents with their occupational focus on academic careers re-

<sup>30</sup> H. C. Koh, *Op. cit.*, 42.

present a somewhat narrow social stratum: therefore, a sample with a wider variety of occupations is suggested for further research. Second, we covered clothing styles for a variety of occasions, but further researchers could include work clothes in order to further understand Western influences on Korean fashion.

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