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Old spirits of capitalism: Managers and masculine alterity in/as the Korean office

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Abstract

This article analyzes the aging of a figure of labor: the male Korean office manager. In contrast to its normative heyday in late twentieth century East Asia, the figure of the older manager has become a devalued and deviant figure in contemporary Korea. Based on ethnography of a Korean white-collar workplace, I argue that the older male manager has emerged as a "figure of alterity" that seems to permeate all aspects of Korean company life. By attuning to how indexes of this figure are marked across different areas of office life, from everyday narration to policy, I show how their negative presence can be cited to justify new office reforms. Younger managers shape their own office identities in contrast to older figures, and formal office policies implicitly target managerial stereotypes. An 'old' spirit of capitalism, embodied in a personified figure, is just as central in articulating and differentiating models of capitalist subjectivity and institutional identity as a new one.

[Labor, Gender, Korea, Aging, Corporations, Enfiguration]

본 논문은 노동의 상징인 한국 남성 사무직 관리자들의 노쇠 현상을 분석한다. 20세기 후반 동아시아의 규범적인 전성기에 비추어 볼 때, 나이 많은 관리자의 피규어는 현대 한국 사회에서 평가 절하되고 비정상적인 것으로 비춰지고 있다. 한국 화이트 칼라 사무 환경을 민족지적 현장연구 관점으로 분석한 본 논문은 나이 많은 남성 관리자는 한국 회사 생활의 모든 측면에 스며든 것처럼 보이는 '타성의 피규어'로 인식되고 있다고 주장한다. 직원들의 서술에서 회사 내부 정책에 이르기까지 다양한 분야에서 이 피규어를 관찰하고 논의함으로써, 이들의 부정적인 존재가 어떻게 새로운 사무실 개혁을 정당화하는 데 인용될 수 있는 지를 보여줄 것이다. 젊은 관리자들은 나이 많은 관리자들과 대조적인 정체성을 형성하며 인사관리적 정책은 암시적으로 피규어의 고정관념을 지목한다. 의인화된 형상에 구현된 '늙은' 자본주의 정신은 새로운 정신만큼이나 자본주의의 주관성과 제도적인 정체성의 모델을 표현하고 차별화하는 데 중요한 역할을 한다.

[노동, 성별, 한국, 노쇠화, 기업, 피규어화]

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Executive Cho called me into his glass-walled corner office on the fortieth floor of the Sangdo Tower on a quiet afternoon during my fieldwork in Seoul. I had been conducting ethnography inside the Sangdo Group, a mid-size Korean steel conglomerate (pseudonym), for eight months in 2015, as an intern on Executive Cho's human resources team in the group headquarters.[1] As I sat down across his desk, he asked if I knew of any academic resources in English that theorized the differences between Eastern and Western management styles. He was looking for authoritative sources that he could cite to study differences among managers about decision-making. As he explained this, he cast his gaze out behind me, onto the plane of desks in the office. He expressed concern about some of the team managers on our floor, and the Sangdo Group more broadly. He already had in mind a way to use this model: to distinguish among those who made decisions based on emotional reactions and those who made decisions based on rational logic. The academic model, which I never found, was meant to prove a hunch: that *older* managers at Sangdo acted emotionally and thus would be unfit to serve as the rational, cool-headed team managers that Sangdo needed.

This article addresses how a once normative and singular figure, the office worker (*hoesawon*), has become generationally differentiated in South Korea (henceforth, Korea). Despite the fact that annual hiring of college graduates in large cohorts has been a steady feature of the Korean white-collar labor market for many years (Korean Labor Institute 2017), the contemporary office is perceived to be composed of a basic generational division: "seniors" (older male managers) and "juniors" (younger male and female office workers), who come from two different worlds. Seniors are generally characterized as career office workers in their 40s and

50s who were raised in the early days of Korean industrialization in the 1970s and 80s, whose experiences have been extensively shaped by military service, a seniority-based promotion system, and hard-working office culture. Juniors are 'younger' office workers who grew up in the period of globalization, consumption, and individualization of the 1990s and have different expectations for boss-subordinate relations, merit-based advancement, and office democracy. These two groups appear as from two different cultures that do not understand each other. The Sangdo employee magazine even carried a special issue entirely dedicated to bridging the communication divide between seniors and juniors. Yet within this divide, the senior, or older male manager, has become marked as a "figure of alterity." On television, in newspaper headlines, and in mentions in the office, older male managers no longer seem to fit in contemporary corporate environments, and more broadly, Korean society. They are linked to a range of social and professional ills: an outdated work ethic, poor decision-making, low productivity, abuse of power, excessive drinking, high personnel cost, the cause of sexual harassment, and demotivators to merit-based promotion. A mid-level Sangdo manager in his thirties lamented to me one day that Sangdo would only be successful if they could remove the layer of older managers who slowed everything down in the office. A newspaper headline put it more bluntly urging "Old men [*gocham*] have got to go!", attributing blame to their high salaries and financial burden on the economy.[2] Those within corporations, even those with high-level administrative titles like Executive Cho, see themselves apart from the management culture of a previous generation and in positions to develop new ways of improving corporate processes and office culture, rationally and scientifically. While older male managers may be seen as economically unproductive members of contemporary corporate society, the figure itself is culturally productive for articulating and motivating new reforms to office social life and

corporate practices, part of a "justificatory regime" to legitimize a new era of national capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2018). Boltanski and Chiapello's concept of a "new spirit of capitalism" was meant to showcase the emergence of the managerial hero as an aspirational figure to legitimize global capitalist change in France in the 1990s. This figure was implicitly contrasted with anti-figures of authoritarian capitalism such as "petty tyrants" in the office who served as oppositional examples of "yesterday's enemies" (2018, 240). In this article, I explore how a markedly *old* spirit of capitalism, manifested in the bad behaviors of aging male managers, provides the moral force to de-legitimate certain occupants in the office landscape as well as to furnish a recognizable anti-register of good sociality to populate new visions of the Korean workplace.

The figure of the "salaryman" has populated academic accounts of East Asian capitalist subjectivities for half a century, emerging first as an aspirational figure in accounts of Japan, where dutiful white-collar men contributed to the peaceful, post-war transformation of Japan into a middle-class society (Vogel 1963). White-collar office work[3] in Korea emerged within the context of a sharp "compressed modernity" (Chang 1999) in which village agricultural life rapidly turned to urban office-based salary work (Janelli and Yim 1993). In Japan, the salaryman remains as a common sociological point of reference, a "ghost" of a "global breadwinner imaginary" now past (LeBlanc 2012). In Korea, the *older* and gendered office worker has emerged not as a relic of past national success or industrialist nostalgia (see Muehlebach and Shoshan 2012), but as a figure of alterity that plagues the present. Figures of alterity are not simply reviled or taboo social types, but act as models of deviance against which other identities are rendered normal and unmarked (Goffman 1974, Hastings and Manning 2004, 304, see also Hall 2014). Such figures do not always appear as coherent voices enacted in individual

performances, but emerge through the comments of observers who can locate, cite, and analyze discrete signs of their presence (Inoue 2006, Smith 2010). The practice of narrating or commenting about such figures forms a reflexive practice to justify social relationships in the present. For example, Ogasawara (1998, 89-90) has described the figure of the *ojisan* ("uncle" or "mister") stereotype of older office men in Japan with poor style and boorish habits, regularly lampooned by younger female office workers in gossip and magazines. Reflexive practice locates traces of such figures in multiple locations, suggesting evidence of their ubiquity and influence, which keen observers can point out. The practice of pointing out behavioral and communicative qualities, however emergent, of such anti-heroes provides motivating foil for new imaginaries in the ongoing dialectics of organizational change (see also Cohen 2015).

In contrast to other marked victims of contemporary white-collar office cultures (e.g., Lynch 2012, Molé 2012, Kim 2015a), older male managers in Korea engender feelings of both sympathy and revulsion.[4] On one hand, they are victims of a "middle ageism" based on an idea that older workers are simply too outdated for modern offices (Gullette 1998). On the other hand, older men are blamed for others' miseries in the office, from verbal abuse of younger men to sexual harassment of younger women. In this sense, they stand ambiguously between labor and management: they may have a situational power as literal "managers" (*bujang* or *gwajang* rank) but are not part of the executive or owning class, and can themselves be subject to retributive action from those above. My concern in this article lies not in adjudicating their status as power-victims or power-abusers. Nor am I concerned with their sociological existence as a discrete class or generation of worker with marked characteristics – this after all was precisely what Executive Cho attempted to do. Rather, I outline how the aged figure becomes a productive zone of differentiation in contemporary offices, akin to the way age and generation function as modes

of moral distinction in other anthropological accounts (Rutherford 2013, Lamb 2015). Anti-manager stances shape individual narratives, corporate branding campaigns, and human resources policies, showing a productivity beyond mere stereotypification. Diffuse qualities of 'older manager-ness' appear to affect (or infect) diverse qualities of office life, like decision-making, office layouts, the conduct of social activities, and the conduct of younger workers.

This article brings an attention to the semiotic dimensions of enfigurement – by looking at the diverse signs through which figures become identifiable or salient in practice – with conceptions of the political composition of organizational or institutional orders themselves. Typified voices and general institutional registers are closely linked (Agha 2005) and it is not uncommon, either in folk conceptions or anthropological accounts, to reify corporations as typified figures, persons, or actors in their own right (i.e., the corporate 'person') which are often highlighted as figures of alterity in their own right, with distinct motives and sociopathic wills for profit or control (see Bakan 2004). Where for Marx "the capitalist is only capital personified," (Marx 1978 [1867], Vol. 1, Ch. 4), the process can also go the other direction: capitalist institutions can also take on the qualities of persons and personas. Older male managers in Korea appear in reflexive explanations as figures both 'in' and 'as' corporate organizations, appearing to control events, norms, the conduct of others, and the efficiency of work. So-called "ten-thousand-year managers" (*mannyeon bujang*) in Korea are seen as illegitimate occupants in companies that emphasize merit-based advancement. Critiques of elders' misdeeds thus ground virtuous managers and employees as the merited inhabitants of coveted economic positions.

This article traces how the figure of the older male manager has been reconfigured from a singular position of normative aspiration, closely linked to a late-industrializing spirit, to a figure of alterity, a negative stereotype from which actors dis-align both as a matter of individual

identity and corporate image. I first discuss the 'aging' of the Korean office worker as a specific kind of chronotopic differentiation, common in other Korean figures of personhood. I then turn to the Sangdo office to look at how individual managers distinguish themselves from this figure in everyday office discourse. Like the invisible decision-making qualities intuited by Executive Cho, the older manager shows up often as an absent present, the discovery of which grants younger managers purchase on diagnosing problems in the office. I then address how implicit older manager stereotypes contribute to an emergent "anti-register" for brand-level publicity as a way of projecting an image of progressive office culture. In the final empirical section, I discuss how qualities of the older manager entered into new HR techniques that intended to scientifically delineate concrete and discrete signs of older male manager-ness.

An Aged Figure

In both scholarly and native imaginations of capitalist success, the figure of the full-time office worker has played a key role in Korea as well as Japan (Vogel 1963, Rohlen 1974, Kim 2018 [2001]). This figure spurred national economic development, buttressed an emerging middle-class society, and provided a vision for social progress in industrializing post-war societies. Fieldwork in Korea in the 1960s depicted the "organization men" of Seoul who replaced the *yangban* (landed aristocrats) as the new figure of male status and success (Christie 1972), a theme later picked up by Janelli (Janelli and Yim 1993) who described the transition from an agriculture society to a modern capitalist one populated by a new generation of office workers.[5] The preponderance of academic attention on the salaryman phenomenon in Japan has been critiqued by Japan scholars for its implicit assumptions of middle-class stability and normalization of the hetero-male subject, images that never clearly articulated with a reality that included both female labor participation and non-normative men (Brinton 1993, Roberson and

Suzuki 2003). Nevertheless, the salaryman and office worker in Japan and Korea, respectively, continue to play significant roles as gendered figures that channel ideas of biographic, family, economic, and national success or failure.

The salaryman or office worker as a white-collar warrior and family breadwinner is what Erving Goffman would have described as a "staged" figure. Goffman delineated types of figures that animate performances of the self, from the "natural figures" that align to our biographical identities (who we feel we are) to figures of "alterity" (who we feel we are not) (Goffman 1974, 496–559, Hastings and Manning 2004). Staged figures can be those one aspires to align their own life events with, eliding a natural figure with a normative one, such as becoming a "breadwinner." However, the process of aligning one's self to certain kinds of staged figures is itself an ongoing performance, and not always successful: in Japan, the salaryman figure has become ruptured from its material potential as "*actual* salarymen fade into the past" (Leblanc 2012,867, emphasis added). Allison has described *madogiwazoku* or "salarymen that 'sit by windows'" because they have failed at getting promoted but cannot be fired (Allison 1994, 98).

This rupture between biographic lives and staged figures has also emerged in Korea, where discussions of gender have long focused on the "gendering of modernity," associations of men with patriotism and industrialism, and women with care and family (Cheng 2011, Cho 1988, Kendall 2002, Kim and Choi 1998, Moon 1998). Large corporations were particularly formative in forging gendered distinctions between work and home (Jo 2004; Kendall 2002, 7). In the financialized or neoliberalized era since the late 1990s, a distinction between productive and non-productive work has also been applied within gendered work categories, such as those men who contribute more to the nation than other men (Song 2009, Kim 2018 [2001]). This fissure has become exacerbated as the possibilities of obtaining a full-time corporate-track job (not to

mention earning steady promotions) have become increasingly competitive in new millennium Korea. Yet the societal obsession of attaining a salaried corporate position as the payoff to educational investment has persisted. The ability for individuals to develop the social, educational and professional capital to inhabit such a figure in their biographical lives remains more and more elusive, dependent on the acquisition of a host of soft and hard skills beginning early in one's education (Abelmann, Park, and Kim 2009), despite idealized depictions of their attainment as based simply on hard work (Park 2010). Against a background of largely unachievable white-collar dreams, Elfving-Hwang (2017) has observed how mediatized depictions of apathetic male managers on television reflect a new ambivalence towards office work, company loyalty, and individual success in general. Depictions like these represent a rupture between the alignment of a biographical self and an idealized figure of office work, a rupture that has resonated as more authentic for empathetic viewers (for ethnographic examples, see Lee 2002, Chung 2009) – a phenomenon Goffman would have called "role distancing" (Goffman 1961).[6]

Age or generation functions as a significant anchor for making economic distinctions. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) described the elderly being blamed by youth for the empty promises of global capitalism in post-apartheid South Africa in the early 1990s.[7] Following the 1997 financial crisis in Korea, Kim (2018 [2001]) described how blue-collar steel workers – once heralded as the "flowers" (*ggot*) of the labor force – began to differentiate among themselves, emphasizing skills and abilities as metonymic points of differentiation.[8] Because older male employees are seen as the inheritors of a high-earning wage system from a previous era (known as *hobongje* or "seniority system"), they are particularly targeted, even though the actual numbers of high-status positions are relatively few in any given corporation. And it makes

sense that the targets for these are specifically male, as high-up positions in the large industrial conglomerates skews male.[9] (Sangdo, typical of the Korean steel industry, had a workforce more than 90 percent male). Efforts to curb the demographic woes wrought by an aging workforce (such as raising the retirement age from 58 to 60 in 2013; see OECD 2018) may in fact exacerbate feelings of older worker-profiteering in positions that should be occupied by more deserving inhabitants.

During the period of my graduate fieldwork among white-collar workers (2011-2017), I frequently encountered collected media images of older male managers. These images had recognizable visual/linguistic features, such as a rough voice quality, outdated office wear, the use of "half-speech" (*banmal* or informal talk, to subordinates), and depiction of illicit behaviors, such as drinking, smoking, or taking bribes. These were counterposed against younger male and female office workers who were sincere, progressive, and able to express meta-commentary in contrast to their aloof and unchanging bosses. The distinction was made salient within staged interactional scenes, where an older manager would burst into a fit of anger at the poor quality of a subordinate's work or make co-workers go for an unwanted drink. Figure 1 illustrates four media characterizations of older male managers in which negative depictions are embedded within interactional routines, involving conflicts with markedly younger employees, who are staged as innocent victims of an oppressive corporate culture manifested in the older male manager. These scenes frequently take place within scenes of office work itself – the moment of submitting documents, making presentations, walking down the hallway, or at after-work dinners, such that the figure of the older managers permeates all corners of office life, from work to (supposedly) non-work.

Figure 1: Four examples of older male manager depictions that index negative interactional behavior. Top left: from the television drama *An Incomplete Life* (*Misaeng*), the manager Ma, played by Son Jong-hak, aggressively yells at a lower-ranking manager. Top right: an angry manager from the comic series *Gaus Electronics,* gets angry (left) and then cools his tone (right) in embarrassment. Bottom left: from the television drama, *The Awl* (*Song-got*), the manager Koh, played by Gong Jeong Hwan, violently forces a junior worker to drink a full cup of *soju,* a common Korean liquor. Bottom right: a nameless, aloof manager in the satirical musical sketch series *Let It Be,* played by Lee Dong-yun, thinks out-loud, saying "Who should I force to present at the next meeting?" Each example not only pits older managers against younger ones, but their behavior is marked by excessive reactions in generic work scenes.

The figure emerges as a typified interactional stance premised on acts of negative reciprocity (Sahlins 1972, 195-6) — that is, acts that take away others' time, labor, or dignity. In this sense, it is not simply one who drinks excessively, but one who forces others to drink against their will; not one who shows diligence by working late, but who forces others to work late.[10] And these singular interactional violations are regularly invoked not just as a corporate problem, but a national problem too. In cultural critic Kang Jun-man's terms, Korean society as a whole is composed of "alphas" (*gap*) and "betas" (*eul*) (Kang 2013). While social elites are often targeted for their negative behavior (*gapjil,* akin to "alpha-abuse") towards commoners, a frequently occurring example of the "alpha" type is the older male manager, such as the famous case of "the ramen executive" (*ramyeon sangmu*) in 2013. A male corporate executive berated a female

airline attendant for improperly cooking his instant noodles. In these cases, "betas" are low-ranking employees or service workers who endure emotional abuse at elder's hands. (This binary understanding of power-abuse has also formatted the MeToo movement in Korea where hierarchical work relations have become particularly potent sites for finding systemic abuses.) Though Kang ultimately argues that everyone in Korea must deal with the problem of secretly wanting to be an alpha, the commonly circulating images of abusive older managers and meek junior employees reify these two positions as "cardinal points of orientation" (Wilf 2015b, 21) in white-collar office life.

The office worker, then, should not be taken as a singular figure in Korea in contrast to other figures of labor, but rather as a split one: a negative depiction of "older men" (*gocham*) or "managers" (*bujang, gwajang*) that co-exists alongside a positive one of hardworking and suffering young male and female workers (*jig-won*). The dichotomization of the office worker figure between those "older" and "younger" follows a familiar binary of contrasting person types found in other Korean figures that make salient higher-order scales of social distinction, such as, domestic-international, old-young, traditional-modern, and rural-urban (Kendall 1985, Harkness 2011). Where old men are "hard," young men are now "soft" (Jung 2010). These distinctions are, needless to say, inherently value-laden. They signal not just new visions of a progressive future but provide moral justification for them: the older male manager figure, despite once being categorized as modern, urban, and wealthy, has been recategorized to the marked position of alterity through perceptions of his non-productive presence, weight on the economy, harm to social progress, and parasitic presence on merit-based professional achievement. Because of his inherited high status (as a long-serving employee who cannot be fired), he is seen as not worthy to occupy such privileged spots in a neo-liberalizing economy premised on individual success

(cf. Molé 2012, Kim 2018 [2001]). Temporal distinctions between an "old" and a "new" Korean office culture are thus rendered salient to publics through literal old and young person-types that cohere across contexts and modalities. Situating them in the past articulates with a reliable Korean chronotope in which the past is seen as rough, harsh, and undeveloped, qualities that inhere in qualities of people and objects (Harkness 2013). Frequently depicting older male managers as not only outdated and old but abusive, inefficient, or self-profiting means that they are not just out of place but hurting those in the present. It also provides justification for social retributions they might face from legitimate figures of authority, such as company ownership or the human resources department.

Everyday Dis-alignments

For rank-stratified employees in the Korean office, identifying who an older manager is (and is not) is a different kind of task from configuring them in the media. The distinction between "management" and "labor" is not empirically clear in an office setting, as many job titles encode "manager" (*-jang*) in them, such as "assistant manager" (*chajang*), and ranks are arbitrarily stratified in four or five-year increments.[11] All employees have some bounded authority in terms of work responsibilities. Moreover, office environments themselves are complex "genre ecologies" (Spinuzzi and Zachry 2000) that are marked by a plurality of modalities of documentation, interaction, and other forms of literacy which structures local participation (such as meetings) and through which authority relations are mediated. In this sense, it is rare to encounter highly coherent tropes or images of older managers in the office – they exist instead across interactional performances (Kiesling 2001). This makes them no less salient, however, as indexical traces (as in, contiguously- or causally-linked signs) of this figure can appear in almost any kind of office activity or narrativization. For male managers in their thirties and forties that I

interacted with at Sangdo, I regularly encountered these kinds of complaints, reflecting a pragmatic attempt to dis-align from being taken as the 'bad kind' of older manager themselves (see Lamb [Forthcoming] on discourses of "not being old.").

The following example is illustrative. While having lunch with a team of employees from another Sangdo department, the boss, Executive Kang, asked me what new projects the HR team was working on. I relayed that HR was developing a new 360-degree feedback technique for the development of executives and team managers. 360-degree feedback, originally popularized in American management theory, is a form of evaluation in which subordinates, peers, and superiors provide anonymous feedback about an individual (usually a manager). Executive Kang, himself having worked for an American consulting firm in Korea prior to joining Sangdo, was familiar with the technique. He was convinced that the HR team at Sangdo would have a tough time implementing it, because more traditional Korean managers would not be able to handle the feedback. This was because it conflicted with their common mode of authority: giving, not receiving, feedback. These managers, he said, would get a "shock" at not being able to control their anger at "gossip" about them from below, while American managers were more able to handle blunt feedback. In painting these emergent contrasts, listed in Table 1, Executive Kang marked out a cultural division between managers who "can" adapt to things "global" and those who "cannot," and those who can stay calm and those who lose their cool, enfiguring the imaginary Korean manager as not fit for modern feedback techniques. In doing so, he used different reported speech elements to voice the manager who, upon getting feedback from his subordinates, would retaliate against them with particularly harsh language.[12]

A. Emergent contrasts in Executive Kang's narrative

Older Korean manager	**Global manager**
Retaliating against feedback	Accepting of feedback
Losing composure	Maintaining composure

Working at Korean company	Working at global company
"20-year workers"	[none]
"Control-oriented"/nitpicking	Visionary

B. Imagined speech of older male managers

Korean	*English*
"geu seggi nugunyago"	[Asking] "who is that SOB"
"nuga sseonyago"	[Asking] "who wrote this"
"jal gochyeora"	[Saying] "fix it well" [i.e. "you know what to write"]

Table 1: Examples of qualitative contrasts (A) between older male managers and global managers, and voiced speech stereotypes (B) from Executive Kang's impromptu description at lunch.

Here Executive Kang used a distinction between American and Korean managers as a way to make a distinction within Korean manager types.[13] Citing this figure through contrasts (A) and marked voicings (B) grounds his own identity in oppositional terms (see Hall 2014). Kang himself was only in his mid-forties but demographically and organizationally indistinguishable from the "older" type managers at a similar rank or age with him. In fact, his position was higher and his age lower than some of the recognizable 'old' men around the office. After this exchange, Executive Kang went further, enacting a mock 360-degree feedback session right at the lunch table: he asked his team members what kind of style of manager they thought he was. One of his team members, a junior manager, commented that he was a "visionary dictator." Another followed by saying that he was a "visionary facilitator." Both used English loanwords, garnering laughs for the over-the-top flattery. The jokes here were double-layered: in one sense, they were telling the executive what he wanted to hear by showering him with phony praise. In another sense, they were also avoiding specifically labeling him one or the other type, instead combining them into oxymoronic descriptors ("visionary" and "dictator") which Executive Kang

and the other team members found quite clever. Even though Kang took advantage of his situational authority to put his team members on the spot, he nevertheless proved his own point: he could handle direct teasing from his own subordinates without losing his cool. In this setting, then, the figure of the older manager provided inspiration for working out what kind of subjects the executive and managers thought themselves to be. The negative figure, then, has a narrative utility for amusement or humor, even in the absence of any real such manager present.

In other contexts, being construed as a certain type of manager can prove a formative dimension of one's office persona. More than just characterological distinctions, having a reflexive stance to the office and its characters can mark one an experienced lay ethnographer of the office itself, especially via complaint (Weeks 2004, Wästerfors 2008). That is, the act of hunting for signs marks one not just as the opposite in a pair of manager types, but as one who demonstrates better analytical qualities. Team Manager Jang on the Human Resources team, under whom I worked as an intern during my fieldwork, frequently exhibited savvy at finding signs of older manager presence around the office. As we daily rode the elevator or talked in the hallway, he frequently alerted my attention to the invisible aspects of the older manager on our floor or in the tower in general. The targets of his rebukes were "old boys" (*oldeuboi*),[14] a term that refers narrowly to tight-knit male cliques from middle or high school. The term can also refer to those who have worked at one company or conglomerate their entire careers, are trained in diverse managerial fields,[15] and maintain strong company loyalty. Team Manager Jang, himself a transplant from another conglomerate, detested those kinds of managers precisely because they lacked the specialized expertise that he had developed in his career and were eager to appear as yes-men for higher ups. Marking off features of their behavior – such as their rougher ways of speaking, poor command of English, or harsh treatment of their own

subordinates – Team Manager Jang framed himself as a friendly, progressive manager. He did this specifically in ways that contrasted the familiar tropes of older managers, such as telling his own employees to go home on time, speaking to them in polite or neutral speech, and pointedly asking for opinions in meetings. In many ways, these were emergent across different activities: where other team managers had formalized team meetings in the conference room, Team Manager Jang would hold them in cozy coffee shops outside the building; where other team managers took their employees to go drinking after work, Team Manager Jang encouraged playing games, going to fun restaurants, or singing karaoke together.[16] It is worth noting that the age differences between Team Manager Jang and other managers around the office was slight – all were between late thirties and early fifties – however, for him, they were of an entirely different generation.

Team Manager Jang would often find traces of old boy behavior in the conduct of young workers as well. This became apparent while reviewing the results of an annual employee satisfaction survey. The survey was sent out to a few thousand non-managerial, white-collar workers across the group's subsidiaries asking about satisfaction with their quality of office life. It was meant to be conducted in private, alone, and anonymously. When the results came back, the office that was expected to have the lowest results (because of its more military-like internal office culture) reported the highest satisfaction rates in the entire group, responding almost unfailingly "5" (most satisfied) on the question of their happiness in their jobs. To Team Manager Jang, these results were clearly aberrant, a sign of either direct pressure from their bosses or simply an internalized awareness that employees should know how to respond when asked for an opinion that could negatively implicate their boss. What we might consider as a general normative order of "office culture," was in fact seen by Team Manager Jang as a sign of

the power of individual team managers to suppress the individual thoughts of regular (i.e. non-managerial) employees. The figure of alterity was not just a negative aspect of office life needing to be reformed – it was also the mechanism stopping efforts to do so.

Pointing out or drawing on the qualities of older male managers features prominently in the way that other men differentiate themselves. Moreover, having the acuity to analyze the presence of these signs – especially the more covert they are – becomes a higher-order sign of one's reflexive institutional knowledge in general, an icon of the "expert analyst" quality of modern management. The "expert"-ification of identifying older managers is not limited to hallway commentary; later in the article I show how HR members developed rational techniques for categorizing bad managerial qualities. In the next section, I address how taking anti-older manager stances has become a salient way to frame progressiveness in employer-brand campaigns.

An Anti-Register

In 2010, the national Ministry of Gender Equality and Family promoted a new office policy known as "Family Day" (*gajok-ui nal*). On Family Day, typically every Wednesday, government employees were forced to leave work at the official stopping time (usually 5:30 p.m.) to go home and spend time with their families. Many corporations also adopted the policy as a sign of alignment with government goals and an indication of their progressive work cultures. A few of the Sangdo Group companies had adopted it as well. One office I observed played a song over the company loudspeaker at 5:30 sharp to remind employees to leave. A few minutes later, employees from the HR department circled the floor to encourage stragglers. By forcing employees to leave early, this policy appears to combat Korea's global reputation for long work

hours. But the particular shape of the policy and the way it is enforced provide a clue as to what the underlying cause of these long hours seems to be. While making no explicit mention of it, the policy encourages being away from work and the pressures of attuning to one's superiors. When HR workers walk through an office, they are severing the invisible chains of authority between boss and employee that link signs of visible self-sacrifice to relations of fealty.[17]

Campaigns like Family Day draw on stereotypes of older manager behavior, a feature now part of the broader landscape of employer brand and office social policy making. Public relations and human resources departments market workplaces as positive places to work through company culture campaigns to current employees and potential recruits. Literature on corporate persons/personas has often focused on the fictive creation of corporate souls (Marchand 1998) or persons that mimic real-life persons or virtuous citizens (Shever 2008, Rajak 2011) in relations with the public. Korean conglomerates, the average of which has roughly twenty distinct subsidiaries, rarely depict themselves as good citizen *persons* that coalesce around a legal or branded entity.[18] Rather, contemporary campaigns humanize office work as a positive social space through an anti-register of older manager sign-posting.

Family Day creates a poetic contrast through the reversal of the negative icon of staying late with fictive kin coworkers by emphasizing going home early to be with one's real kin. Other corporate culture reforms pick up more subtle cues. When I interviewed the HR director of Sangdo South, another subsidiary in the Sangdo Group, he glowingly told me of the myriad new office policies his department had initiated for improving "internal company culture" (*sanae munhwa*). These included: 1) an "eco-office" program that installed indoor plants in each team area, 2) the institution of after-work sports leagues such as bowling, hiking, and soccer, 3) a billiards tournament, 4) small-group meet-ups for workers of similar ranks, and 5) new

guidelines for company after-hours socializing or *hoesik.* The first is an attempt to "naturalize" the office space, an otherwise bare arrangement of desks that follows a hierarchical pattern, from low to high according to rank. The second, third, and fourth programs promote alternative socializing activities that emphasize collective, fun, team-based activities, exhibiting a degree of distinction from older manager-marked activities, like drinking, that are unhealthy, hierarchical, and parasitic on team-based relations. In the fifth case, HR managers redefined *hoesik*, an activity that generally connotes Korea's corporate drinking culture, to its broader denotational meaning of "company dining." The guidelines suggested that teams and managers could participate in doing volunteer work, reading books together, or going to the movies with co-workers as possible substitutes for "regular" *hoesik*. This image of wholesome activities was reinforced in the Sangdo employee magazine, where colorful spreads in every issue portrayed two or three employees (usually one young man and one young woman) engaged in small-group activities, like cooking, coffee-tasting, or paper-making, reinforcing ideas of non-alcoholic, gender-equal, and pro-social forms of *hoesik* done during the day-time.

One of the most visible policies adopted by many large corporate groups has been the "119 policy." 119 is the national emergency telephone number in Korea. The policy stipulates that company credit cards should only be used pay for "1" restaurant, with "1" type of alcohol, until "9" p.m. Anything beyond those conditions should not be covered by company credit cards. (Some companies instituted their own variations, such as "111" or "112" to express creative differences.) The effect was to officially minimize time in quasi-office related activities by cutting off managerial authority to use discretionary funds excessively. Similarly, another program known as "clean card" was also widely adopted among Korean companies, in which attempts to use company cards at bars with illicit names or any attempt to swipe a company card

after midnight would be refused electronically and flagged for auditing. Together with these policies, a new lexicon of descriptors for *hoesik* has also emerged distancing it from its more illicit connotations, describing it as "healthy" (*geong-ganhan*), "wholesome" (*geonjeonhan*) or simply "alternative" (*isaek*).

The older managerial stereotype is not directly named in these policies but is indirectly cued by mere mention (such as *hoesik*) or topical focus (such as emphasis on leaving on time). This indirectness resembles other forms of corporate "doublespeak" (Lutz 1989) or "corporate oxymorons" (Benson and Kirsch 2010) usually signaled to the public as part of public relations campaigns. Given that campaigns in Korea are also directed to employees, such indirectness reflects the delicate nature of directly castigating a perceived sub-group of current employees – and one known for retributive abuse, to boot. Attempts to restrict drinking or smoking may be seen as targeting a certain group, but encouraging movie-watching or book-clubs cannot be easily mis-attributed. Thus, internal discourses contrast with treatment of managers in the public realm, where harsh and moralizing descriptors circulate of specific individuals. We can see this in the basic distinction between words for "old men" that circulate in public (*oldeuboi, gocham,* or *ggondae*) which place emphasis on their age, versus their internal reference where managers are referred to neutrally such as "those above" (*wit-saram*) or even affectionately, such as "seniors" in English. This pattern of reference – critical in the public sphere, evasive or indirect in the company sphere – does not mean that such policies merely appease older male managers.[19] In fact, this "anti-register" directly targets personnel issues surrounding older managers using flowery, positive, or neutral terms, as listed in Table 2 below. Terms such as *myeong-ye toejik* ("emeritus retirement") refer to programs for coerced early retirement while terms such as "*samjin auteu*" or "three strikes and [you're] out" a baseball term that refers to a general policy

for all employee evaluations, but one specifically geared to those who might receive bad evaluations as managers over multiple years.

Terms for referring to policies surrounding older male managers

Korean	Direct translation	Actual policy
myeong-ye toejik	emeritus retirement	incentivized early retirement
isaek hoesik	alternative company dining	non-drinking work events
hoching supyeonghwa	title horizontalization	rank reductions
samjin auteu	three strikes [and you're] out	performance-review based dismissal
illyeok jeokchae haeso	workforce accumulation resolution	fixing overstaffing
keullin kadeu	clean card	ban on illicit use of company credit card

Table 2: Indirect references to activities or actions surrounding older managers that have become taboo to directly refer to.

We should certainly be skeptical of efforts that Korean companies (and companies in general) take in crafting explicit "cultural" models of themselves (cf. Kunda 1992). As Hagen Koo (2001) has noted for Korea, corporate culture programs in the 1990s "used paternalistic language and symbols to recreate the pseudo-family sharing a common economic fate among the members of the company" (193) in the face of divisive labor policies. Today, however, corporate policies suggest a public stance against older father-figures, both from a labor standpoint (as seen by the proliferation of early retirement policies) and from a social standpoint (as seen by the internal crackdowns on drinking, smoking and other marked activities). As a circulating set of references, signs of older managerial presence are a productive form of differentiation for those *not* identifying with those kinds of figures, such as companies attempting to redefine their internal and external images, through real and fictive family belonging.

Expert Solutions to Managerial Problems

To return to the discussion at the outset of this article, the scientific modelling of differences between managers can lend more legitimacy to efforts to oust older managers than performances or marketing do, but can also be more elusive. For Executive Cho and Team Manager Jang on the HR team, this was a matter of their professional expertise in human resources. Even though they had intuitive senses of which men on their floor or in the broader group constituted bad team managers or "old boys," any formal assessment of them – either to demote them from team managers or to build a case for their dismissal – would have to be mediated through a rational and objective process divorced from their own opinions. Such methods were not always as proficient at correctly and successfully categorizing particular persons as more manageable discourse genres, such as hallway banter, were. Relatively simple techniques, such as employee satisfaction surveys could be hampered by subordinates who tempered their responses in ways favorable to their managers. Executive Cho's desire to find formal, academic models of East-West decision-making processes reflect the necessity of using higher authorities to combat local ones.

Efforts to introduce new office programs, like satisfaction surveys or 360-feedback were thwarted less by nefarious intentions or ethically torn employees than by the technical limits of expert analysis to connect ideal-type binaries with actual individuals. During my fieldwork, Executive Cho's HR Planning unit had the task of implementing new policies that would create objective evaluations for executives and team managers across the entire group. (These were the only two levels at which the headquarters department had the authority to operate within the bounds of labor laws.) The program they created, called (as a pseudonym) the New Sangdo Development Program (NSDP), provided a new model for evaluating team managers and executives on a range of factors. The key basis of this model was not financial performance nor

career history but the abstract notion of "fitness" or "appropriateness" (*jeokjeolseong*) that a team manager or executive would possess as a condition for maintaining their managerial function (but not their position as an employee).

Evaluations as part of NSDP at Sangdo were intended to draw a comprehensive picture of managerial qualities that captured different aspects of leadership behavior, with the goal of creating a robust set of metrics that could objectively adjudicate between well-fitting and ill-fitting leadership-types. Because the process of the evaluation for NSDP had to be comprehensive and objective, however, it could not show any sign of favoritism or interpretive subjectivity. The HR managers had to devise a program that would apply to all managers and executives, both good and bad, fairly – including themselves. Of further difficulty was that the method also had to properly capture regularities in interactional behavior, over a period of one year, in a metricized way. After conferring with different consulting companies and scouring books and websites for appropriate methods and surveys and visualization techniques, the HR team eventually decided to use its own customized 360-degree feedback survey and platform to gather the voices of employees.

360-degree feedback selects for certain attributes that are favored or disfavored in the evaluation of an individual manager. The survey that the HR team developed was intended to redefine the categories of being a Sangdo leader. A previous version of the 360-degree feedback had led to problems: evaluators easily inflated the scores of their managers (i.e. by ranking a five) and the survey itself only produced one flat metric of a "good" manager type. Analytically, the survey structure itself hindered the ability to distinguish managerial qualities beyond just "good" or "bad." To create a better image of the manager, the HR team would have to

deconstruct the manager into discrete analytical categories that would then have to be translated into questions that employees could reasonably answer.

The team developed three different survey question types to do this: the first method utilized 5-point scale questions that asked respondents to note how often they had "observed" certain behaviors of their team manager or executive, from "always observed" to "almost never observed." The second method was a forced-choice method between two contrasting, but positive, qualities, again based on their observational experience. The third asked evaluators to grade the subject-area competency in a range of areas, such as business knowledge, analytical skills, and strategic planning ability. Throughout, the survey questions implicitly embedded value distinctions between those who "allow open thinking" versus those who "play by the rules," those who "emphasize new ideas" versus those who "emphasize efficiency," an indirect way of distinguishing the style of experts, such as those in the headquarters, and the (assumed) opposing skills of subsidiary managers or older executives.

Each of these three areas hid any higher-order characterization of bad managers by avoiding direct questions, while also forcing employees to choose between types, preventing any tendency for score inflation. Only after the survey results were complete were answers rendered into superordinate categories. The first set of questions correlated to "values" by using behavioral observations to assess whether the manager/executive was living up to the ideals of the group. The second correlated with "leadership style" to indicate what kind of leader one was, based on contrasting features. And third, "work execution" judged managerial aptitude against a standard set of processes involved in managing. Each of these modes of representations selected for different managerial qualities that could scale up to create a composite image of "managerial-ness" whose different metrics might indicate relative "fitness" for their position. Taken together,

they iconically captured the comprehensive features of a manager, in much the same way health diagnostics form a "total" picture of health. The potential uses of these were not as bald as simple evaluation and dismissal, however. The HR team envisioned creating ideal-type manager styles for different office functions, like finance or strategy, such that a manager who was a "controlling type" in a department that needed a "forward-looking" type might be seen to be the wrong "fit," and justify the relegation of the team manager title or a transfer to the "right" team.

After the initial run of the 360-degree feedback results and analysis, I am not certain how the NSDP ultimately affected specific team managers or executives across the group, as individual personnel records are kept confidential and executive decisions were made behind closed doors. However, two unexpected problems emerged: one, the new composite image of the new manager did not generate the clear-cut "types" that the HR managers had envisioned. The vagaries of numbers indicated that they would not have a clear picture of a given manager's profile only after a few years when any trend could be properly aggregated and seen. Second, the survey generated unexpected results for those that were *not* expected to receive bad results: a minor commotion was caused when an executive in the headquarters, himself decidedly *not* an old boy, received some of the lowest evaluations in the whole group, reflecting the fact that bad managerial qualities could cohere in persons outside of the figure of alterity itself.

Conclusion

The image of the besuited corporate office worker has endured as an aspirational, if out-of-reach, capitalist figure in Korea and Japan, despite its dismantling in the West as an element in formal office culture. Yet we may find cross-cultural parallels in the kinds of enfigurement-differentiation processes that I have discussed here: in the US, the function of management itself reached its institutional peak in the 1950s where it was a mark of modern (male) virtue,

professional aspiration, and a vital part of hybrid administrative-collectivist ideals of a coordinated, professional society (cf. Miller and O'Leary 1989). By the 1970s, management as a field was reduced to an image of a "hired hand" that served to carry out the desires of shareholders, the true agents of capital. Furthermore, the virtues associated with managing people had shifted to the virtues of analyzing information (Khurana 2007). Today, new job-seekers in the US stress over their independent and entrepreneurial qualities, not their company loyalties or desires for progressing up a managerial chain (Gershon 2014). Ushering in these tidal shifts in discourses around American management and labor subjectivities was a figure of masculine alterity – the middle manager – that came to embody everything seemingly wrong with the corporate-bureaucratic style criticized in the 1970s: homogeneous, lacking ambition, inefficient, obedient to authority, and resistant to change – known in particular by the sartorial metonym of the "gray flannel suit." By the 1990s, US business discourse had promoted explicit ideas of "new management" that sought to transform administration-oriented managers into free agents who could contribute to organizational goals through discrete areas of knowledge, not delegations of power (see, for instance, Drucker 1992). In contrast, older managers were castigated, such as Ho's description of negative accounts of older Wall Street workers as "clock-watching," "'stagnant', 'fat,' 'lazy,' 'dead wood' that needs to be 'pruned'" (Ho 2009: 252, cited in Wilf 2015). Indeed, the aesthetic of a new Silicon Valley management style marked by casual dress code, flat structures, and informal communication, takes inspiration directly from an opposition to the vertical, formal, and serious images of office cultures in the past, and one that cohered directly in the figure of the "organization man" (Whyte 1956). In this way, despite the fact that "management" itself is a vague empirical category with little consensus around its precise location or function (see Grey 1999), figures of management cohere to provide stable

cultural or institutional referents for shifting value regimes. Where new spirits of capitalism can channel transcendental aspirations, old spirits are not just dismantled, but play a vital role in morally justifying their shift as well as shaping the structural and oppositional character of such 'new' spirits themselves.

In this article, I have discussed a case in which the figure of the Korean office worker, once reputed as the hardworking figure whose diligence propelled Korea into a compressed, industrialized modernity, has become divided. Older male managers are not only seen as outdated, but parasitic on future forms of merit-worthy capitalism in the new moral economy of Korean corporate labor. This particular figure of alterity is not a social outcast but precisely one who lies at the heart of contemporary Korean capitalism's most valued positions. While publicly circulating, mediatized discourses enfigure the older manager as a coherent person who reacts emotionally and abuses others through a limited set of recognizable signs, the coherency of this enfigurement is more diffuse within actual organizations, from individual displays of differentiation to highly indirect management programs. This complexity produces a less coherent figure, but strangely one that also seems to permeate all dimensions of office life, making the process of 'de-managerializing' corporations an ongoing effort, as any individual instance of managers behaving badly can be taken as a sign of the (continued) presence of the figure's structural presence. For morally likeable figures, such as the gossipy female secretarial worker discussed by Ogasawara's (1998) in the Japanese office or the French factory worker who uses company time for personal work (Anteby 2003), counter-corporate efforts can appear as admirable attempts at resisting formal structures and norms; for negative figures like the older male manager, they appear as persistent structural problems, creating a sense of institutional failure, as efforts to devalue older male manager presence in one domain (such as by changing

after-work socializing practices) are met up their continued presence in others (such as in surveys). Indeed, these efforts have been ongoing before the time of my research in the 2010s and before the 1997 financial crisis: Korean companies began to implement horizontal team structures and team manager roles in the 1990s. Nominally about workplace efficiency, many companies effectively delinked individual rank from administrative authority, rendering the previously powerful *bujang* (literally, "department manager") into an authority in title only. In its stead, a new class of "team managers" (*timjang*) was selected by merit, not tenure, and thus became the elected and rightful managers of the new basic work unit – the "team" (Park 2006). To the degree that the older male manager persists as a figure of alterity across these various institutional points of articulation and periods of time suggests that those in corporate organizations are equally captured by this categorical binary as a way of imagining and embedding figured distinctions into organizational projects.

The problem of management hierarchy fits within a conventional narrative of temporal reckoning: an outdated employment paradigm from the 1970s must be overcome on the way to flatter, friendlier, and younger offices, the symbol of a later, advanced stage of global (non-managerial) capitalism. Workers who might have been born in the 1970s strangely seem to embody the work culture of that period as well. In this way, personified figures embodied in real persons are not just people within the office, but can reify perceptions of such institutions, providing the impetus for extensive institutional reform in ways that affects all workers. Beyond the ageist and differentiated critiques of certain forms of labor that are not seen to merit protection, we should be wary of the way these assumptions redouble both developmentalist discourses of economic and social progress for certain types of subjects, as well as global shifts in economic ideology that have gradually devalued and dismantled the "society of organizations"

(Davis 2012) as an aged model. The presence of a problematic and pervasive figure makes these shifts seem morally self-evident, providing justification for their extensive and ongoing reform, while cloaking other, not-yet-enfigured authorities that may be harder to spot.

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[1] Sangdo, like other large groups, is a conglomerate with a holding company structure and multiple subsidiary companies. The specific office I worked in was the holding company which had a majority share in most of the subsidiaries in the group and I informally refer to as the headquarters. All corporate and personal names used in the article are pseudonyms and various details have been changed to prevent identification.

[2] "'Old men have got to go': Corporations' rank diet" [*Gocham dduigehara: gieopdeul jig-geup daieoteu"*]. Published April 10, 2015. http://news.donga.com/3/01/20150410/70623742/1

[3] Despite many parallels with Japan, Korean office workers are not generally referred to as salarymen. The gender-neutral terms *hoesawon* (company member) or *jig-won* (staff) are used. Gendered points of differentiation emerge through terms as "Samsung-man" or "Hyundai-man," metonyms signaling the importance of one's place of employment, not professional category itself.

[4] For other discussions of both sympathetic and "dirty" figures in Korea see discussion of female call center workers who smoke in Kim (2015) and self-styled internet "freaks" (*pye-in*) in Yang (2017).

[5] According to Lett (1998), the figure of the *yangban* (landed aristocrat) may have disappeared sociologically in the twentieth century, but it nevertheless continued to provide the model for status-conscious, upwardly mobile middle-class success.

[6] See Krause-Jensen (2011) for a useful discussion of workers' acts of role distancing in the context of Danish office workers, picking up themes from Kunda's (1992) work on workplace cynicism towards management ideology.

[7] "The youthful comrades forged their assertive identity against the foil of a sinister, secretive, gendered gerontocracy; significantly, those attacked were referred to as 'old ladies,' even when they were men" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 288).

[8] Choi (2018 [2016]) has described the emergence and circulation of a typified humor genre known as "*ajae*" [middle-aged man] gags. More than a narrative genre, such gags are cited by young people and women to mark middle-aged men as particularly *not* funny.

[9] Criticisms of older women figures are not absent but circulate around mother figures overly ambitious for middle-class status, such as described by Nelson (2000) or Abelmann (2003). To this point, Schober (2018) has recently

described how men and women labor activists are lionized differently in popular protest. An exception may be the wealthy class of chaebol family owners, for whom men and women seem equally subject to public scorn.

[10] Thus, it is not just a hierarchical relationship itself, but the abuse of the privileges of an intimate hierarchy. Most dyadic social relations in Korea rely on dyadic relationships of superiority and subordination, occurring even among young children (Ahn 2016).

[11] The basic managerial ranks (*sawon, daeri, gwajang, chajang, bujang*) encode clear managerial authority in their morphology: *bujang* for instance, is the head (*-jang*) of a department (*bu-*). However, since the 1990s, these roles have increasingly been semantically vacuated and now stand purely as ordinal status markers.

[12] These were overheard at lunch where I was not able to write down notes. They were partially reconstructed from my memory and with the help of another intern who was also present whom I had asked to clarify Executive Kang's comments.

[13] See Inoue (2003) for discussion of the 'transduction' of Japanese women's language with American white women's language.

[14] The well-known Korean movie "Old Boy" (2003) by Park Chan-wook hinges on forgotten acquaintances from high school.

[15] In the nationalist accounts of industrial history, Korea has often been categorized as "managerial" style in which managers are circulated and trained in a wide variety of disciplines such as accounting, HR, strategy, and operations. See Vogel (1991).

[16] This is not to say that Team Manager Jang did not participate in certain tropes of a male Korean work culture, such as smoking or drinking. However, he was conscious in his efforts not to impinge upon his team members below him.

[17] These problems seem directly rooted in the physical presence of a boss. When a boss is on vacation, employees mention that they too are on a vacation. One employee once described days without the boss as "kid's day" (*eorinui nal*). And these pressures are related to one's direct boss(es), not bosses from other departments. This differs from Japan where "death from overwork" (*karoshi*) is a widely reported phenomenon that stems from pressure by a general sense of work overload, not particular bosses.

[18] Some groups do highlight how unique character traits of the founder should stand as a virtuous model to follow but the brand itself is rarely personified as such.

[19] In parallel, the word for "company" also follows this pattern: critical media in Korea prefer the word *chaebol* which has a decidedly negative connotation (akin to "robber barons") while companies use neutral descriptors for themselves such as *daegieop* (large corporation) or simply *hoesa* (company/firm).