

Those unfamiliar with Confucian ideology will learn how it is inextricably linked to everyday aspects of Korean life. Several articles explore directly the contradictions between attitudes toward Confucian principles and behavior. For example, Moon examines attitudes toward marriage and familial life among three groups of Korean-descended women dispersed around the globe. She concludes that "the attitudes of the majority of women in the studies do not concur with Confucian-rooted Korean traditional values and norms," while her findings also reveal that the bulk of household chores are done by the women surveyed (p. 71).

Likewise, Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim explore a similar contradiction in a study of 622 Koreans in Chicago. Using a sample of Korean wives to assess their gender role orientation, Kim and Kim found that a majority of the women within dual-earner families believed that the "woman's place is in the home," thereby maintaining Confucian ideology; they point out that "most of the wives were traditional in their gender role orientation in spite of their intensive employment" (p. 108).

There are a few weaknesses in *Korean American Women*. Its analysis of Confucianism enervates the possibility of creating a feminism that identifies with a Korean nationalist perspective. This is, I realize, a daunting task given the male-centrism of Confucianism. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to conceive of a feminist approach that identifies its roots in Korean nationalism, rather than consistently attributing sources of strength to be the product of contact with Western culture. Another weakness is that the bulk of the survey work uses samples from New York, California, and Chicago, Illinois. Although these locales provide the largest concentrations of Korean American populations, data from less highly populated urban areas might be revealing of different trends.

*Korean American Women* provides a thoughtful and diverse approach to analyzing critically Korean American females' relationship to Korean men, feminism, and American society in general. The text is an extremely welcome addition to the body of both feminist and ethnic studies literature with its detailed information on both exigent and theoretical issues touching Korean American women's lives. *Korean American Women* will be of value to scholars in many disciplines, including gender studies, demography, psychology, sociology, and ethnic studies.

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*Silicone Survivors: Women's Experiences with Breast Implants.* By Susan M. Zimmerman. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. 1998, 225 pp., \$59.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

The decision to receive breast implants has often been regarded as a personal decision between a woman and her doctor. Susan Zimmerman, in her thought-provoking new book, suggests that the implant decision is not solely a personal one. The decision to receive breast implants is entwined in a nexus of cultural expectations of femininity and the masculine control of medicine. Zimmerman's aim is to explain the experiences of women who choose to receive breast implants and show how women are engaged in the medicalization process of repairing "inadequate" breasts. She is primarily interested in "how predominating beliefs about medicine (as well as cultural assumptions about femininity) shape the decision to

receive breast implants, and how these beliefs and assumptions affect the ways in which women experience the outcomes of their surgeries" (p. 6).

Zimmerman conducted 40 interviews of women she located in Boston and California through breast implant support groups, information networks, plastic surgeons' referrals, newspaper ads, attorneys' offices, and personal contacts. Of the 40 women she interviewed, 25 received implants for cosmetic reasons, and 13 women received implants for reconstructive surgery (usually after a mastectomy). Thirty-five of her respondents reported some physical difficulties or complications related to their implants, and 20 of her respondents have had their implants removed. Many of the women in her sample initially felt empowered by their decision to undergo breast implant surgery. Yet, over time, many of these same women began to suffer from strange ailments that left them feeling frustrated, ill, and disillusioned with the medical establishment.

Zimmerman skillfully illustrates the interaction of medicine with cultural ideals of feminine beauty as she describes the impetus for surgery for the women in her study. Many women expressed that they sought breast implants to feel more feminine. Some women received breast implants at the urging of husbands or boyfriends who believed that the implants would improve their partners' appearance. Others, especially the women who received implants after mastectomies, expressed the wish to become whole women again. Some of the women who received breast implants for cosmetic reasons related feelings of inadequacy with their small breasts. The "breasted" experience that the women desired contained strong cultural overtones regarding expectations of ideal breasts and femininity. This is well-covered feminist ground. We already know the impact of breasts on the construction of femininity. Yet to hear the women relate their personal decisions to receive breast implants and have no awareness as to the impact of cultural expectations of breasts and femininity on what they see as simply personal choices is haunting.

Zimmerman charts two transformations that many of the women in her sample underwent: the physical transformation as a result of the surgery and the emotional transformation and creation of self as the result of receiving implants. It is this second transformation that is particularly poignant. Frustrated with the misinformation and disinterest of the medical establishment, many of the women in Zimmerman's study began to educate themselves regarding the risks of silicone breast implants, rather than rely on advice from their doctors. It was during this process of education that some of the women became aware of the impact that cultural expectations of femininity had on what they previously perceived to be personal decisions to receive implants. When the women viewed their implant decisions within the larger cultural framework of constructed femininity, many decided to remove the implants that they felt were making them sick. As a result of their decision to face their worst fears of losing their implants and their femininity but perhaps regaining their health, many women in Zimmerman's study began the emotional transformation of shaping their own feminine identity. It was when the women decided to remove their implants and take control of their medical treatment that they felt most empowered. Zimmerman's book is an excellent view into the meaning that breasts and breast implants has for recipients and femininity as a whole.

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