East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal (2016) 10:29–49
DOI 10.1215/18752160-3141411

Embodying Progress: Aesthetic Surgery and Socioeconomic Change in South Korea

Eduardo Zachary Albrecht

Received: 1 January 2014 / Accepted: 8 April 2015

Abstract Since the early 1960s South Korea has had one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. These developments have had a deep impact on the structure of society, but what impact have they had on the body? This article examines the relationship between such rapid socioeconomic transformations and the changes in uses and perceptions of the physical body among Koreans. This article uses a phenomenological theoretical framework to look at the narratives of embodiment of young Koreans that have had experiences with aesthetic surgery. The research examines the hypotheses that (1) the rapid transformations occurring in the South Korean economy are partly enabled by a specific ideology—a kind of ideology of progress in which economic productivity is valued above other aspects of everyday life, and (2) this ideology is articulated in the way individuals view and manage their bodies. In particular, it is evident in the embodied practices of Korean youths, such as the relatively recent popularization of aesthetic surgery. Thus, through surgical technologies the body is made to be more economically "productive" and may better contribute to the progress of the country as a whole.

Keywords South Korea · plastic surgery · aesthetic surgery · biomedical technologies · social change · embodiment · phenomenology

1 Introduction

Consider the economic distance South Korea has traveled since the 1950s, when all infrastructure was destroyed by the Korean War and millions were homeless, living in

Acknowledgments This research was supported by the 2014 Pukyong National University Fund number C-D-2014-0557. I thank He Ying for translation assistance and *EASTS* editors and reviewers for their insightful and constructive comments. Parts of section 3 of this article appeared in "Aesthetic Surgery and Social Change in South Korea," *Hanguk munhwa illyuhak* (*Korean Cultural Anthropology*) 44, no. 2: 359–89 (2011).

E. Z. Albrecht
Division of International and Area Studies, Pukyong National University, South Korea
e-mail: edu_albrecht@yahoo.co.uk

poverty. Today, new apartment complexes rise from the ground at a breakneck pace (Figs. 1 and 2). Consider the differences in the socioeconomic environment South Korean youths are socialized in today compared with the environment their parents grew up in during the military dictatorship in the 1970s, or their grandparents under Japanese colonial rule before the war. The objective of this article is to examine the effects such rapid socioeconomic transformations have had on the Korean people and how they use and perceive their bodies. The article advances two hypotheses: (1) the rapid transformations occurring in the South Korean economy are the product of an "ideology of the possible"—where everything can be made better, more useful, more practical, and in which productivity is valued above other aspects; (2) this ideology is articulated in the way individuals view and manage their bodies. In particular, is ideology evident in the embodied practices of Korean youths?

In exploring these hypotheses, I developed a methodology that relies on the following steps. First, identify a phenomenon among South Korean youths where the body is clearly implicated. Looking at youths as opposed to older generations highlights the focus on social change. One of the peculiarities of anthropology as a discipline is that it allows for the field to unfold as you approach it. The phenomenon being sought should thus emerge from the field, because it must be culturally specific. Constance Classen (2004: 148) recommends we understand the field by looking at its systems of sensory organization; that is, how the different senses interplay and are related to each other. She finds that "the sensory qualities emphasized by a society" can tell us something about the social organization of that group. Perhaps such a phenomenon may be identified by reflecting on what senses are prioritized in South Korea. One might speculate that the sense of sight is at the center of the sensory spectrum. South Korean youth comprise a generation born and bred in the digital era, where different media, from the Internet to video-equipped cell phones, constantly position the sense of sight at the forefront of everyday experience.

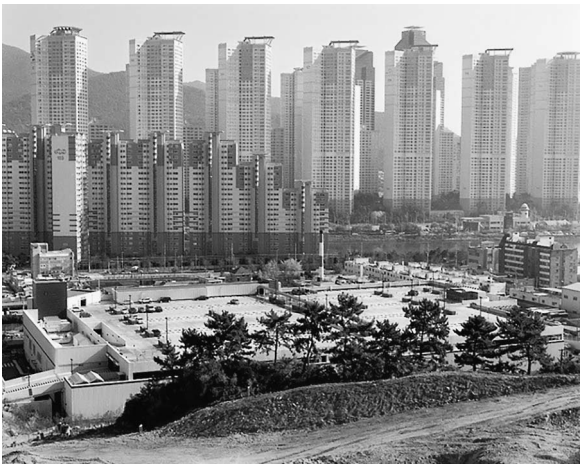

Fig. 1 Newly completed high-rises built in the northern periphery of the city of Busan, South Korea. Photograph by Nicholas Albrecht, December 2011.

Fig. 2 Apartment complexes on the Nakdong River in Busan, South Korea. Photograph by Nicholas Albrecht, December 2011.

Is the profuse use of aesthetic surgery a part of this visually brokered sociocultural realm? According to data drawn from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (Asian Plastic Surgery Guide 2015), South Korea has the world's highest per capita rate of aesthetic plastic surgeries. With seventy-four operations per ten thousand inhabitants, it surpasses by far the next three highest: Brazil (fifty-five operations), Taiwan (forty-four), and the United States (forty-two). Figure 3 shows an advertisement for surgery in a Seoul subway station. The logo explains: "Beautiful Appearance, Beautiful Soul." Thus, one could consider aesthetic surgery a culturally specific example of embodiment in South Korea.

The second step of the methodology was to find and interview a number of individuals involved in said phenomenon. I relied on an ethnographic approach, with a

Fig. 3 Advertisement for aesthetic surgery in a Seoul subway station. Photograph by Nicholas Albrecht, December 2011.

series of one-on-one interviews conducted with twenty young men and women who have had aesthetic surgery within the last year. To find informants, a "cascade" technique was used, in which the first individuals were introduced via local connections, and then those suggested I meet with friends of theirs, and so on.

I give no detailed descriptions of individual informants, because many preferred to not mention names, and many were not happy mentioning their profession or residence, either. Aesthetic surgery in South Korea is a confidential matter. Some interviews were conducted clandestinely, where no one was to know that we met and what we talked about. We met in different locations, such as cafes, university campuses, and hotel lobbies, and at all hours of the day. The conversations lasted an average of one hour and were recorded and later translated.

It is nonetheless necessary to give some sense of the informants' positions in society to contextualize the interview extracts below. Seven males and thirteen females were interviewed; their ages ranged from twenty to thirty years. Fifteen described themselves as middle class, three as lower middle class, and two as upper middle class. Twelve were currently enrolled university students, six were employed and had university degrees, and two were looking for jobs and also had degrees. All were Korean nationals of Korean ethnicity. Half lived in Busan, the second largest city, located in the southeast of the country; a quarter lived in Seoul; and the others were from a sprinkling of different cities. Such factors as political orientation and sexuality were not discussed. More individual details are provided alongside the interview extracts.

After an introduction, the interview focused on the informant's sensory experiences. The bulk of the information relayed in the ethnography comes from these semiformal conversations in which I asked questions such as, what looks good and what looks bad?, and what looks right or wrong? From these cue questions, the interviewees would then take the discussion in different directions, freely making associations to their personal life and social experiences.

The third and final step in the methodology was to draw connections between this embodied practice and the socioeconomic changes occurring in the country, in particular, the rapid progress the nation has undergone in the past several decades. It is necessary to better clarify the term *progress* as it is contextualized in South Korea. The country's rapid development has not been achieved without sacrifice; so while South Koreans are proud of their accomplishments, the term also evokes memories of great suffering by a generation of workers that for decades worked longer hours than in any other nation on earth. South Koreans have a complex relationship with the term. When discussing the country's past and future progress with native South Koreans, one gets the sense that this "progress" is imposed from above, as a kind of national mantra, along with the more recent catchphrase "global Korea."

We must thus try to contextualize the term within the background of South Korea's recent history. At the end of the Korean War, successive nationalist governments managed to steer the nation onto a path of intensive industrialization. The tactics used were often brutal, especially toward the workers. Nevertheless, right-wing governments managed to prod the people along thanks largely to a propaganda machine that did not shy away from evoking the trauma of the Korean War, the humiliation of Japanese colonial rule, and the constant menace from the communist North.

We should also add that the United States played a strong supportive role in this economic miracle. The US strategic and military interests during the Cold War were such that an industrialized, capitalist South Korea, firmly within the US sphere of influence, was a welcome development. Gregg Brazinsky (2007) explains why US nation building in South Korea was so successful, citing the unique ability of South Koreans to adapt US institutions to their own aspirations. This process, however, involved US support for both authoritarian developmental models and civil society's dialogue toward democratization.

The notion of progress in the postwar period encompasses disparate aspects of life in South Korea. John P. DiMoia (2013) shows how rapid improvements in the nation's medical infrastructure—including aesthetic surgery technologies—were part of a deep desire on behalf of the government to consolidate the country's image as modern and progressive. Sheila Miyoshi Jager (2003) examines how certain key historical narratives were used as part of the modernization drive: stories of self-sacrificing, virtuous women were weaved with narratives of nationalism to construct a modern South Korean consciousness.

Thus, *progress* as used here is a complex and contested term, the product of an often violent and intricate history. The term is one of the prime notions that has defined South Korea's trajectory over the past hundred years or so. This article passes no value judgments on that historical experience itself; the focus here is not on defining whether the economic advance was good or bad but on learning how it is inscribed on the body of the nation's citizenry. As shown below, these interviews demonstrate that many of the changes occurring in the social and economic life of the nation do seem to rely on changes that individual people are willing to make on their bodies. The implications of this may challenge preconceived, top-down notions of economic development and social change. In particular, the ethnography suggests that the conditions that enable a nation to "develop" may be much deeper than the usual structural prescriptions made at the economic, political, or judicial level. Those structural changes, ultimately, interact with transformations occurring on the physical body of the citizenry.

Based on the interview data reviewed in this article, embodied ideology in South Korea emerges as both a burden and a resource. As a burden, its adherents feel a pressure to keep up the pace of the country's development. This is because, as the body is found to be a source of change, it comes to have objective economic value; and as all things of value in a competitive capitalist society, unless that value accrues it will be lost. This puts an incredible amount of pressure on men and women to mine and extract all the "value" possible in their bodies. Constant maintenance and amelioration not only are possible, according to this logic, but are actually required by the competitive nature of the opportunities provided. To put it in the words of one of the young women interviewed concerning her surgery, "If everyone else is doing it, and you want a job, then you really have no choice, do you?" As a resource, however, this attitude may ultimately be one of the ingredients that have made the South Korean economic miracle possible. Continuous individual microphysiological adjustments create a major force behind macroeconomic and political developments.

To support the aforementioned methodology and findings, I developed a theoretical approach to better frame the connection between the sensory lives of young Koreans and their social circumstances. This approach considers the way the body is experienced as a metaphor of one's relationship to society. As Setha M. Low (1994) says,

there is a kind of "metaphoric transparency" between the way individuals experience their bodies and the "self/society contract." According to this perspective, changes in the body correspond to changes in the nature of an individual's relationship with society. It should thus be possible to use the prism of the body to address issues of ideology. Similar approaches have been used in the anthropological understanding of illness (see Aho and Aho 2008) and of the senses (Howes 2004) and have long been promoted as a paradigm in anthropology (e.g., Csordas 1994; Low 1994).

This focus urges us, quite simply, to understand the physical experiences of individuals in order to understand their ideology. It offers us what Thomas J. Csordas (1994: 4, 9) calls "a critical methodological opportunity to reformulate theories of culture, self, and experience" in anthropology "with the body at the center of analysis . . . the body as the source of subjectivity," or as Margo L. Lyon and Jack M. Barbalet (1994: 63) put it, the body "as agent . . . of both an individual psychological order and a social order."[1] The view put forth in this article can therefore be said to be linked to that of existential anthropology, for which experience of one's body is seen to be separate from the determinants of culture (see Bateson 1973; Fernandez 1986). The body here is not the passive subject of society and its discourses but a door into "the structures of experience" (Goldstein 1961: 127). In this article, all discourses, concepts, and ideological constructs are placed "on the same existential footing" as embodied experience itself, for they are all ultimately but different aspects of the same thing (see Jackson 1996; Rorty 1979: 365–94).

From an anthropological point of view, bodies seem like the most cryptic of terrains for the practitioner to gaze upon. Perhaps it is their obstinate silence; perhaps it is the mystique that surrounds them in so many cultures. Whatever the case, while bodies may not be made to talk, nevertheless their owners can talk for them. In this article I propose that narratives of embodiment, that is, how an informant recounts his or her sensory experiences, may be used to address issues of ideology.

To support this claim, the theoretical approach put forth here is based on the following three points: (1) to understand ideology we must bridge the social (empirical categories) to the aesthetic (conceptual impressions), and in order to do that we must ground it in the body; (2) the body communicates through the aid of narrative, weaving a significant pattern out of the still life it inhabits; and (3) stereotypes are what our narrative worlds are made of, synthesized units of an imagined reality.

Terry Eagleton (1990: 332–34) writes that we cannot envision any sort of substantiation of the political field unless we address it also from the vantage point of the aesthetic.[2] He explains that ideology combines the empirical and the conceptual, and he draws on Walter Benjamin (1977) to point out that this combination can also be found in our human body. For Eagleton and Benjamin, therefore, if we are allowed to speak of a connection between politics and aesthetics, and therefore to understand the role of ideology, it is because we have collapsed the boundaries that exist between the

[1] This has not always been the prevailing thought in anthropology. Rather, what happens to the body is often seen to be a direct consequence of the social and cultural environment (Burton 2001). This view has a tradition that goes back to, for example, Mary Douglas (1966, 1970), who describes bodily practices linked to particular types of social organization.

[2] Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) seminal work on taste brought this concept to the heart of anthropological debate.

world of empirical categories and that of conceptual impressions, and we can do so only by basing our analysis in the ancient unity of the human body. Our bodies are the site of our ideologies.

To address the problem of how the body is communicated, I suggest that individuals manage and communicate their sensory experiences in narrative form, as if they were telling themselves and others a story. David Carr (1986: 60–61) offers a useful interpretation of narrative in this regard. He explains that "life can be viewed as a process of telling ourselves stories, listening to those stories, and acting them out or living them through." Through this process narrative gives "shape and coherence to the sequence of experiences we are having as we are having them" (62). Narrative becomes the way we organize and rationalize the experiences of ourselves as selves so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed. This expression of coherence through time allows an individual to relate to events with a sense of unitary closure—a closure used to counter an otherwise "formless experience" (Skinner 2000). In other words, by applying the narrative model, inert life (the physical self, the body) becomes a meaningful life (the moral self). Narrative, then, is the process by which the body comes to have meaning and can thus be communicated.

I also address the problem of how to convert narrative information into notions that are methodologically usable and can be made to relate to social and economic concerns, such as the issue of rapid socioeconomic change in South Korea. To reduce narrative to a set of concrete components, or units, for the purpose of analysis, the concept of stereotypes may come in handy. Sander Gilman (1985: 16–17) explains that "everyone creates stereotypes" and that "we cannot function in the world without them." He demonstrates how all subjects relate to the world in an essentializing way. Stereotypes perpetuate a necessary sense of safety. Yet, they also allow important distinctions to be made among categories, characteristics, and qualities. For example, stereotypes allow one to attribute value to action. This kind of information about one's world can be methodologically useful. It can be brought to bear upon social, political, and economic arguments. In sum, stereotypes are the units that place an individual's narrative of embodiment in relation to the rest of the world.

2 Aesthetic Surgery

While the objective of the article is not to provide a comparative perspective of aesthetic surgery in different countries, it may nonetheless be useful to include a short review of the literature on aesthetic surgery in other countries. To ground the argument on Korea within other globalized national contexts, this section reviews experiences in other emerging and industrialized countries.

The go-to text for the sociological study of aesthetic surgery has long been Gilman's *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (1999). Gilman argues that aesthetic surgery is appealing universally to all people in all countries essentially because it helps one pass from one group in society to another, which they would much rather be identified with. His research points out how social assumptions about the body are articulated through surgery, so that the body is changed and molded according to those assumptions. In particular, he dwells on the ways in which ideas of race and ethnicity have interacted in the past with surgical

technologies, for example, how surgery was used to "correct" the "hook nose" of the Jew in Europe attempting to avoid persecution or the "pug nose" of the Irish in the United States attempting to look more American.

Other works have looked into the role of race in determining the use of aesthetic surgery. Eugenia Kaw (1993) finds that women of Asian origin in the San Francisco Bay Area undergo different types of surgery in an attempt to avoid being associated with negative stereotypes ascribed to their race—such as that of being "too passive" or "lacking in emotion."[3] Kaw, however, extends the argument to include nonracial dimensions, such as the desire of these women to appropriate a kind of American consumer ideology. Such ideology presumably highlights and validates one's ability to purchase such discretionary services as aesthetic surgery.

More recently, a study of British female university students found differences in the way aesthetic surgery is perceived depending on the ethnic background of the student (Swami, Campana, and Coles 2012). Caucasian women had lower body appreciation and self-esteem than did their Asian and African Caribbean counterparts and thus had a higher acceptance of aesthetic surgery. This finding complicates previous findings that looked at minority ethnic or racial groups and aesthetic surgery. In particular, we are invited to not overrely on ethnic/racial dimensions when we study the phenomenon, as there may be several reasons an individual wants to pass from one group to another, not all of which are tied to being a minority.

Alexander Edmonds's research, in this respect, goes a step further. Edmonds (2007a) interlaces a class dimension to the well-documented racial one. He argues that the increased availability of aesthetic surgery has incited the desires of those on the margins of the neoliberal economy to compete in new markets. In Brazil, body-transforming technologies are intimately connected to issues of modernity, social mobility, and consumer/glamour culture. As described below, this is very much the case in South Korea, too. Brazil and South Korea, in fact, share a common socioeconomic trajectory, as they have both rapidly industrialized in recent decades. Their populations are still in the relatively early phases of the expansion of consumer culture.

Edmonds (2007b) looks at how distinct, local logics of race and beauty may be reinforced, not erased, as the beauty industry expands in emerging countries.[4] From this perspective, globalization, far from being a homogenizing force, multiplies the number of approaches to, and uses of, aesthetic surgery.[5] Therefore, while aesthetic surgery in Brazil and South Korea share some characteristics, including its significance for social mobility, they also show very basic differences in relative approaches.

[3] Similarly, Igor Niechajev and Per-Olle Haraldsson (1997) found that women of Middle Eastern descent living in the Stockholm area were seventeen times more likely to undergo aesthetic surgery than ethnic Swedes. They ascribe this to presumed assimilation difficulties and discuss the psychological and ethical aspects of decision making by patients and surgeons.

[4] Much of the research on aesthetic surgery in emerging economies tends to be less helpful to this study because it focuses on the medical tourism industry (e.g., Ackerman 2010; Alsharif, Labonté, and Lu 2010; Masi de Casanova and Sutton 2013).

[5] See, for example, Gazagnadou 2006 and Seremetakis 2001 for works that deal with the connection between globalization and embodiment. Seremetakis 2001 is particularly interesting, describing embodiment as the "symbolic site where the relationship between nation-state identities and globalized experience is being worked out, fantasized, contradicted, and occasionally reconciled" (115).

For example, South Korean society is relatively more homogeneous than that of racially mixed Brazil. This decreases the emphasis on the "racialized beauty myth" but increases the emphasis on class and the economic/productive dimensions of the surgically altered body in South Korea. This is explored in more depth below.

Virginia Blum (2003) looks at the social conditions in the United States that have made aesthetic surgery part of the common culture and modern-day identity of many Americans. She mentions the usual emulation of celebrity icons—a thing also very obvious in South Korea—but then delves a bit deeper by connecting the emergence of aesthetic surgery with the rise of psychoanalysis. Just as a psychoanalyst can help you change your inner self, a surgeon can help you change your outer self. They may be different dimensions of being, but they both can undergo similar processes of amelioration.

Blum (2003) points out that one of the reasons surgery has become so common in the United States is the connection people make between their outer and inner selves. American pop culture urges people to locate identity on the surface of the body. Individuals are thus encouraged to believe that a new physical body, something you can buy and work on, can actually change your character and therefore your life. In South Korea, too, not only is aesthetic surgery very much an everyday thing, but it is also perceived as capable of changing one's destiny. Both in the United States and in South Korea there has been a movement away from the older way of seeing things, where inner character was expressed through one's features. This article looks further into this notion and expands on it by connecting it to fundamental economic changes in society.

Closer to Korea, Laura Miller (2004: 83) notes that contemporary Japanese youth are also "learning to be fashionable in ways quite different from the experience of their mothers and fathers" and that this "represents an evident generational shift in ways of thinking." For Miller, these different ways of thinking entail "a refusal by both men and women to conform to older mainstream models of masculinity and femininity," and in particular, "while most of the older generations were resigned to living in the bodies they were born with, younger generations believe in the possibility of self-transformation through a variety of new cosmetic or surgical means" (84).

This emphasis on increased possibilities is also present among Korean youths that engage with body transformation practices such as aesthetic surgery, as I demonstrate below. In Korea, however, the dynamic of increasing one's potential seems to be very much tied to the job/marriage market and to the productive dimensions of the body in the workplace and the family, while in Japan it seems to be more concentrated on ludic, if not hedonistic, aspects of life.

A significant similarity between Korea and Japan lies in the way that this belief in increased possibilities among youths includes a confidence in the possibility to acquire a new identity—even a new destiny—with the application of surgical and cosmetic treatments. In East Asia, the form and shape of the body are tied very intimately to the form and shape of one's character, in ways that have not been noted by authors writing on aesthetic surgery in other regions of the world. Of course, as Miller (2004: 95) points out, the aesthetic surgery business "exploits this new belief in the possibility of change." In Japan "promotional materials include bubbly proclamations such as 'I became a new self!'" Korean clinics use similar rhetoric in their advertisements.

The last section of this article expands on this notion. For Miller, in Japan "what is fundamentally new about this generation's play with fashion, however, is the manner in which gender and ethnic identity are no longer essentialized, but are seen rather as malleable aspects of identity open to reconstruction. Finally, the ways in which young people are willing to dye, cut, pierce, mold and otherwise alter their bodies reflects a new historical attitude about the possibility and desirability of changes to the body" (95–96).

This study builds on this point and expands on it by looking at the way in which these new practices relate to changes in the broader socioeconomic context or, as Arthur Kleinman (1992: 171–73) puts it, how "in the microcontexts of daily life . . . macro-level socioeconomic and political forces are played out." The next section attempts to answer the question, what is the relationship between aesthetic body technologies and Korean society in general?

3 Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea

The space of one article does not allow for an exhaustive appraisal of the different sociological and psychological approaches applicable to the subject of aesthetic surgery or for a complete overview of the practice in South Korea. Nonetheless, this section tries to frame the issue in relation to the objective of this article by probing the narratives of embodiment of South Korean men and women. I assess such things as the personal/psychological and practical/social roles of aesthetic surgery and how the psychological and social roles of aesthetic surgery become part of an "ideology of the possible" that has contributed to the economic development of the country.

An increasing number of men also undergo aesthetic surgery in South Korea (see Elfving-Hwang and Holliday 2010). In light of this fact, about one-third of interviewees were men. That most informants quoted here are women is an unintended consequence of the fact that the woman seemed to be a great deal more communicative of their experiences. Therefore, even if many of the informants cited are women, the subject of this inquiry was not the relation between aesthetic surgery and the condition of women in South Korea. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that a gender studies review of the phenomenon could be of much use for future studies on the subject. In particular, an approach that looks at the different conceptualizations of the female body, for example, the one used by Blum (2003), would be an interesting project.

The individuals interviewed do not represent a cross section of Korean society, either demographically or geographically. As a consequence of the theoretical approach adopted (in which I focus on the narratives of embodiment), this section concentrates on qualitative aspects of the conversations rather than quantitative characteristics of the interviewees. The interviews were structured along guideline questions that focused on the sense of sight and touch. I asked such icebreaker questions as "What do you like about the way this or that particular feature looks now?"; "How does it feel now?"; "What was wrong with the way it looked/felt before?"; and "What was the operation like?" These were followed by questions that popped up according to where the narrative was going: What do your friends think of your new nose? Is there a difference between original beauty and surgical beauty? Are

you satisfied with the changes? Do you want to do more? Large portions of the interview transcriptions are included in the text to give the reader a better idea of the informants' experiences and opinions.[6]

As a quick introduction to the kinds of surgical interventions addressed, four types of surgery are most common in South Korea—all of the interviewees had at least one of these operations, most had a combination of two or three, and some had all four. The most common is the double eyelid surgery, or Asian blepharoplasty, in which an incision creates a crease in an eyelid without one. The eyelid can therefore pull farther back and make the eye look bigger.[7] The other three types are jaw shaving, nose injections, and forehead implants. Perhaps the best way to explain these procedures is to use the words of a young woman that experienced them firsthand. She was an attractive third-year university student that described herself as upper middle class, a fact corroborated by the designer clothing and accessories she wore. She studied international studies and business.

> Jaw bone surgery is used to make the face look more like a V. When I was a high school student, I took jaw surgery. First, the doctor put some anesthesia cream on the jaw. Then they used a laser to break up my jaw bone. It was very painful and I could feel it ache for a long time.
>
> To raise the ridge of my nose they used a filler injection. First they enter into the inner nose; then they shave the cartilage making the sides of the nose more rounded. Then they separate the skin from the bone and insert the silicone to suit the pattern of the nose.
>
> The material for forehead implants varies from silicone, to artificial bones, to fat from other parts of your body. The silicone is much more dangerous than the fat, because the fat is mine and the silicone is an alien object. Silicone implants require an incision into the scalp and the insertion of a tube through which blood can flow. Despite this downside, it is very attractive in that the implant is permanent. But recently the fat is more and more used in this operation, since the fat doesn't have any side effects. They take the fat from your thigh or your buttocks.[8]

Why would an individual want to do any of this? "I just want to be prettier," said one of the young ladies interviewed, as she looked at me as if it was a silly question. This same answer was given time and time again. Yet, a wide range of motivations and meanings operate behind the apparent simplicity of this phrase, from the determined self-confidence implicit in the statement to a desire for beauty so pressing that any action taken in its pursuit becomes axiomatic and self-explanatory. The following exchange with an aspiring airline hostess reveals the frequently circuitous nature of the interviews:

---

[6] These transcriptions contain the original text recorded and transcribed from the interview. The text may have been slightly edited for clarity or to eliminate redundancy.

[7] The popularity of "round eyes" in Asia is often ascribed to a phenomenon of Westernization, by Western observers. Interestingly, however, according to the explanations put forth by the interviewees here, the objective of having round eyes is not at all to look more Western but, rather, to look more like a child. Wide eyes convey a look of youth and innocence.

[8] Many more types of procedures deal with other parts of the body, such as slimming operations or hair implants. For the sake of focus, this article deals with only the four types described here.

What made you take the surgery?

I did it only for myself. I wanted to become more beautiful. People say that it is a trend, but the truth is that I don't care much about this trend. I just want to be as pretty as I can be. I want to do more surgeries, such as having a bigger forehead.

Why a bigger forehead?

Because it will make me look more 3D, and therefore make my face look smaller.[9]

Why a smaller face?

I don't know why. I guess that is just the trend in Korea. You know, many people think the small face is much more beautiful. That is the new trend in Korea nowadays.

Joanna Elfving-Hwang and Ruth Holliday (2010: 1) find that "there is a pressure on both women and men to transform their physical appearance to conform to popular ideals of beauty." They note not only the high percentage of people who are getting surgery but also the high percentage of people who want to get surgery. They cite a recent study among high school girls that found that "nearly 80% were unhappy with their appearance and viewed aesthetic surgery as a remedy" (1).[10] But it is not only about appearance. In fact, not infrequently the interviewees spoke of an increase in their self-confidence as the biggest aftereffect. Consider the following description of the experience by a third-year university student who supported her studies and surgery by working in a coffee shop near campus:

When I went to the hospital by myself, when I lied down for the surgery, I felt a little nervous. I was afraid because I heard about some people who took the double eyelid surgery and got some adverse effect, such as losing their eyesight or not being able to close their eyes anymore. But then I thought: I have waited twenty years to do this, and now I finally have the courage to take the surgery. Even if it fails, it has already been good for me because I finally found the courage to do something for myself. Other people that want to become more beautiful take the surgery again and again. But to me, that I could find the courage to do this once was already a big improvement to my life. It was very meaningful.

Also consider the following passage from an interview with a younger, first-year university student: "When I saw other girls who had small faces and big eyes, I envied them so much and my confidence went down. However, after the surgery I felt much more confident about my face. My face now looks and feels very natural, I feel very

[9] The time of these interviews coincided with the launching of the new Samsung 3D television screen for household consumers. Ads proclaiming the wonders of 3D entertainment were everywhere in South Korea.

[10] Elfving-Hwang and Holliday (2010: 1) also find that aesthetic surgery is so "normalized in Korean culture that the government perceives it as a way to improve employment success, offering income tax deductions against the costs incurred." Also, doctors operating in this field were not restricted by the normal government caps on how much they are allowed to charge for their services (Fackler 2009). However, this policy has been reversed lately. The government is now trying to slow the phenomenon, for example, by showing antisurgery ads in cinema theaters.

confident about this." These passages convey two important stereotypes that kept on recurring in the narratives of the interviewees: the stereotype of surgery as a way of "taking control," and the stereotype of "becoming natural" through surgery.

Analysts have pointed out before the aspect of taking control and gaining expressive confidence. Eun-Shil Kim (2009: 5–14) noted that "the body is becoming understood as a key mechanism for producing new selves . . . a medium for expressing oneself and conveying possibilities of creating new subjectivities." Victoria Pitts-Taylor (2007) looked at how the availability of surgical technology has given individuals new ways in which they may fashion their subjective selves. The interviewees' passages above give us a measure of that possibility, as they experienced the moment of surgery on the body as a moment of personal catharsis, a moment in which they could grow as a person.

The notion of "becoming natural" is a little more complicated. The choice of the word *natural* to describe the body's new "feeling" would seem to imply that surgery, far from being viewed as an artificial intervention upon the body, is more like a natural evolution of the body. As one interviewee put it, "I did the surgery because I wanted to develop myself." A young man, an office worker, explained it thusly: "I want to make my nose look more natural. I don't want my nostrils to flare when I smile. I mean, the bridge of my nose is not so high, so when I smile the nose becomes flat and the nostrils become large. You know, when the face is expressionless the bridge of the nose looks higher. I just want my nose to look natural when I smile." The mainstream discourse concerning aesthetic surgery, at least by pundits in the West, is that surgery is an artificial procedure having an artificial outcome. However, the frequency with which the young men and women mentioned "becoming natural" and the sheer comfort and confidence with which they spoke of their new faces lead me to reflect on the possibility that it is not so. It might be better to consider surgery in South Korea not like the application of an artificial layer (that is, not as cosmetic) but like the moment in which an inner beauty comes alive through the surgeon's scalpel. If this were the case, then the new physical appearance should be experienced not as an alien facade superimposed upon an old, original self but as an authentic and genuine self, liberated through the agency of surgery—just as genuine, if not more so, than the original.

Consider the following reasoning by a fourth-year economics student to shed some light on this idea. We were discussing the implications of surgery on dating when she interjected: "In Korea, Koreans can recognize a person who took double eyelid surgery if they saw them before and after. But they can't tell if they did not know you before you took the surgery. The people that know me now know that I took the surgery. But one day I will go on blind dates and meet new people that did not know me before." According to her narrative, the old can be completely forgotten for the benefit of the new—there is no need to take any baggage from the past along. On another occasion, I asked a young female office worker whether she would ever tell her husband about her surgery. Her answer was very straightforward: "I will keep my surgery a secret from all the boys and from my husband. I think they do not need to know what I did."

Two observations can be drawn. First, this degree of control over one's body implies that women are not simply succumbing to a dominant male ideal of feminine beauty but, if anything, are manipulating those stereotypes to their tactical advantage. Casual observers of aesthetic surgery may ascribe the phenomenon to the peculiar pressures that South Korean woman bear in their search for a marriage partner, where wider eyes and higher nose bridges can grant a

competitive advantage.[11] Elfving-Hwang and Holliday (2010), however, challenge the idea that women who engage in aesthetic surgery do it essentially for the benefit of the male gaze. They note that others have problematized those approaches that "presume that women subject themselves to procedures simply because they lack agency to resist dominant discourses of 'normal' femininity and beauty" (citing Davis 1995: 1). Elfving-Hwang and Holliday explain that the individual engages proactively with those discourses. The interviews seem to back this up.

Second, the interviews confirm the idea that the new physical appearance (and the new self-confidence that comes with it) is indeed a "natural" and "authentic" new self. Simply put, the informants do not feel that they have become artificial, and we should not view them as such. The psychological availability of the peculiar option—to renew one's physical self to the point that no one needs to know about it—gives us an insight into how the "ideology of the possible" functions. It must be possible for the novel to become the authentic. These narratives of embodiment seem to point to the existence of the stereotype that "new is more authentic." How does this stereotype relate to the rapid economic development of South Korea? The answer, I believe, is that for an ideology to sustain such rapid economic development, it must support a worldview in which the old must always be eclipsed by the new.

A young man explained, "Young Koreans have cut themselves off from the older generations, and in so doing, they have become modern. In the West they are still traditionally minded; they have not been able to become their own generation." They are, he explained, "still living under the shadow of their past culture." While it was obvious that he was generalizing for the sake of conversation, his words came to mind during another interview with a young lady working as a hotel concierge in an upper-class area of Busan: "After surgery, if a girl becomes prettier, people think that is good and don't care about the fact that she did the surgery."

It is as if the new and improved must by default be welcomed as the good, the real, and the authentic. What one did in the past stays in the past; the only important thing is the outcome. The new and improved replaces the old. And it does this so quickly that at times it is hard to keep up with what is new and what is old. The following excerpt from an interview with a job-seeking recent graduate illustrates this feature rather well:

> My skull is slightly flat. That is not good. I want my forehead to look more three-dimensional. When I get some money I might have my forehead made more rounded and my nose made to look higher. However, beauty standards shift quickly, and who knows what will be the trend in the future. Recently some people want to cut off parts of their lower jaw to make their face look more V-shaped. I might do that.

Her words make us aware of just how much aesthetic surgery has come to be accepted in South Korea, but they also draw our attention to the fact that the standards are continually changing. The interviewee was so aware of the speed with which definitions of beauty shifted that she could not easily tell us what kind of surgery she wanted to do in the near future. This prompted the question, Can anyone simply be born pretty? The hotel concierge quoted above explained: "Of course, original beauty

[11] For a detailed ethnographic account of marriage in South Korea, see Kendall 1996.

is better, but if you are born ugly, you have no choice and you must take the surgery to become pretty. An ugly girl is worse than an ugly girl who took the surgery. That is why there is no such thing as an ugly rich girl. Because if you can, then you take the surgery and become pretty." It is not easy to uncover what pressures bear upon such strong stereotypes of beauty and ugliness. To be ugly is for her almost unnatural, a handicap. Being ugly is a problem that can be and must be fixed. This logic fits in with the idea considered above, where the results of surgery were viewed as "natural." But why is the stereotype of ugliness such a huge problem? When I asked her what made her want to be less ugly, she just said quickly: "I needed a job." This motivation came up again and again in the interviews, far more so than dating. All informants placed employment before dating as a motivation for aesthetic surgery.

Therefore, consider the popularity of so-called employment cosmetics—surgical procedures designed to improve a job seeker's chance of being hired. Daniel Jeffreys (2007) quotes Kim Sung-Min, the chief surgeon at IMI Plastic Surgery in Seoul, saying that "nearly 30 per cent of our patients want to change their looks for job interviews. Some come during their penultimate year at university, because they want their face to look natural by the time they start job hunting. Surgeries to ears, eyes, nose and brows are the most popular."

While it is difficult to gauge what anxieties and aspirations motivate young job seekers in any market, the ease with which South Korean youths are willing to modify their bodies for a job is nevertheless remarkable. One might be tempted to ascribe such behavior to a culture of competition present among East Asian nations in general. However, in relation to other countries in the region, South Korea's ratio of surgical procedures per person ranks significantly higher (Asian Plastic Surgery Guide 2015). Consider the following explanations made by four different informants, three university students close to graduation and one recently employed graduate:

> After graduating from university, to be good looking is one of the most important things for the job interviews. In Korea, a girl's appearance is very important for the success of a job interview. So for me, taking surgery to look prettier for an interview is like making an investment for the rest of my life.

> Though one's personality and work experience are very important for the interviewer, looks make the difference. Since we will all be fresh out of university, and all at the same level of experience, at this point, especially for the girls, since the interviewers are mostly men, the girl that looks prettiest will get the job. Between two girls that have the same ability and experience, the company will always employ the more beautiful girl.

> In our country, people think about their appearance more than in other countries. There are many more requirements for the girls than for the boys. It is not only about the face but also about the body, which must be slim. We have witnessed many peoples' failures to get a job because of their appearance, even if they have the abilities. We know that ability is not the basic requirement for work nowadays; appearance is the basic requirement, and so many people want to do the surgery.

> The face is a kind of business card. When I took this job interview, my boss said to me: "You are the most beautiful girl among all the applicants, so I give you the

job." I took the double eyelid surgery before I got this job. So I got this job thanks to the double eyelid surgery.

4 Conclusion

Should we criticize those that succumb to the pressures of a patriarchal and objectifying human resources machine, or should we celebrate the courage of those that have the audacity to go to such great lengths to play the system? Both approaches should be resisted; we should instead strive to uncover the cultural and social specifics that inform this type of logic. One thing that stands out is an understanding of the body as a practical artifact to be deployed within the narrative of one's life and ambitions, the body as a kind of product.

The body here is viewed as an artifact/product that can be bartered in the job market, and perhaps elsewhere. In fact, as Miller (2004) pointed out, it is hard to deny that the phenomenon of aesthetic surgery is part of a rapidly expanding consumer culture, in tandem with the flamboyant fashion trends and eye-catching accessorizing that also characterize youths' orthopractices. David Howes (2004: 287–88) puts forth the idea that "according to the sensual logic of late capitalism," the market has increasingly made it its business to engage as much of the body as possible; as a consequence, "everything seems designed to create a state of hyperesthesia." *Hyperesthesia* is defined as a condition that involves an increased sensitivity to the stimuli of the senses.[12] Howes is telling us that, according to the logic of modern consumerism, the body is no longer simply a casing to be lived in but an entity to be continually felt. The mortal coil exhausts its purely physiological functions to assume here a more commoditized-aesthetic kind of function.[13] "Late capitalism," he says, has put the body at the forefront of one's concerns.

This notion of the body as continually present, continually felt, and continually problematized (and therefore continually requiring some kind of service, intervention, lotion, or treatment) is very useful toward an understanding of the social context of aesthetic surgery in South Korea. Once the body is made present, it becomes immediately expendable and exploitable as an instrument in one's narrative. This leads to the sort of dry realism that is detectable in the informants' explanations. Stereotypes of beauty in the workplace are a problem, surgery is the solution, and that's that. If we need a more attractive physique to go to work, these youths are saying, then let's get one and get on with it. The body becomes a piece of equipment among many at the disposal of one's ambitions. Kim (2009: 5–6) puts it nicely:

[12] This "hyperaestheticization of the body," Howes (2004: 298) explains, has ultimately escaped the control of the market, as spaces have "opened up where people can 'make sense' of things in all sorts of non-commercial, 'non-rational,' but aesthetic ways." In other words, the consumer culture of a modern Korea may have indeed generated a number of modifications and transformations that occur on the body, but at the same time, the significance of those practices eludes "the market" as they become a means of expression for those experiencing them.

[13] This is the reason I prefer the term *aesthetic* to *cosmetic* or *plastic* surgery. Even though the terms are used interchangeably, they have some differences. *Cosmetic* implies the covering up of some kind of fault, *plastic* is incorrect and misleading, while *aesthetic* captures the full sensory scope of the intervention.

> Within Korean society, the body is now becoming a field of cultural signification and a "mark" of political and economic issues, as well as the centre of consumption and economic production practices. . . . With the body becoming integrated into the core of the global economic system, it has also become a key agent for promoting economic circulation. . . . As women's appearance is a form of capital within both the market of labor and marriage, many women engage in cosmetic surgery as a technology of "self-management" or "self-improvement."

Momentarily focusing on this idea of the body as a means of "economic production," what is noteworthy is how the body in Korea is not simply a resource for capital to exploit (labor) but also the terrain upon which an economic system is partly erected.[14] Without sidetracking into a discussion of capitalism and neoliberalism, it is interesting to note how the body is indeed a territory that, if mined appropriately (so that the full splendor of what an informant termed "inner beauty" may be brought to the light of day), can then be deployed within various markets according to the ends and objectives of various owners. The body commodity is marketed for a job, changes hands at the signing of a work contract (where it becomes a resource for the company), and may be taken to shop whenever it needs tweaking (back to the surgeons).[15] In short, according to the embodied narratives of the South Korean youths getting aesthetic surgery, we find the prominence of the stereotype that "beauty is a resource." No longer in the eye of the beholder, no longer a purely visual, abstract, and subjective quality, beauty is objectified, monetized, and exchanged.

How does beauty as a resource relate to the rapid economic development of the country? For an ideology to sustain such rapid economic development, it must support a worldview in which everything is considered to be a resource. Even things that are usually considered to be subjective, abstract, or nonproductive, such as beauty, are to be put to use. All virtues must be assetized; all qualities, quantified. This stereotype teams up with the one identified above, in which the old must always be eclipsed by the new. I suggest that this type of thinking is necessary for rapid economic development to occur, especially on the scale that South Korea has experienced.

To what extent is this form of "embodied progress" particular to South Korea? Is it not similar to the rapid economic development experienced and being experienced in other newly industrialized or emerging economies? Edmonds (2007a, 2007b) demonstrated how the popularization of aesthetic surgery in Brazil is also very much tied to the country's recent entry into the "neoliberal" economic order, so a first answer would seem to be affirmative. There are, however, some differences that make the South Korean a peculiar case.

The first difference is a matter of degree and speed. Nowhere has the phenomenon of aesthetic surgery gained mainstream acceptance as completely and quickly as in South Korea. Second, in other countries the phenomenon is not always so closely tangled with issues of economic productivity but seems to be related more to issues of

[14] See Hardt and Negri 2000's use of the concept of biopower for a description of this transformation in capitalist societies in general.

[15] In this respect, we might agree with Alan Petersen (2007), who finds that the contemporary body has been subjected to many different processes of commodification. Considering the pressures of the drug industry, fitness, self-care, and so forth, Petersen shows how the body has become an object that both consumes and is consumed.

racial stereotyping (Swami, Campana, and Coles 2012; Edmonds 2007a, 2007b; Niechajev and Haraldsson 1997; Kaw 1993), a matter not so pressing in largely monoethnic South Korea. Third, nowhere has the government and corporate system been as involved in aesthetic surgery as in South Korea. This can be seen, for example, in the way the government promotes the "K-pop" music industry—where aesthetic surgery is abundantly practiced and even celebrated—and in the chaebols' calculated transformation of the citizenry from factory workers to shopping mall consumers.

This last point deserves closer attention. As South Korea powered through the industrialization process in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, it needed a dedicated and pliant workforce. Now that the nation is a high-tech exporting giant, with much of its production being increasingly located elsewhere, it needs a faithful base of consumers to provide the cornerstone of demand for its products. Essentially, the Korean body has gone from being a source of labor to a problematized terrain requiring constant maintenance. Kim (2009: 5–14) frames this transformation within the country's rapid integration into the global economic system:

> The Korean society's cultural understanding and experience of the body has undergone tremendous changes since the nineteenth century. Traditionally, Koreans viewed the body as something natural handed down from one's ancestors; therefore, the body was a form of collective asset belonging to one's family and tied to one's social status. . . . Considered to be the basis of both one's filial piety and one's propriety as a human being, the body was not something that could be modified at will. . . . Towards the end of the twentieth century along with the end of the Cold War regime and the active integration of the Korean society into the global neoliberal order, bodies of consumer subjects . . . began to be constructed. . . . [This] conveyed the message that the body is not a natural thing, but subject to change.

This description fits well with the narratives collected here. However, it may be possible to use the informants' experiences and insights to expand on Kim's point. In Kim's view, with the induction of South Korea into the "neoliberal order," new embodied practices have come to bear on the Koreans. The theoretical formula applied is the following: if the socioeconomic structure of society changes, then the body changes. By this reasoning it is the specifics of a social order that determine how we define our physical bodies. If we subscribe to this theoretical perspective, we would have to admit that it is the "ideology of the possible" that urges individuals to undergo aesthetic surgery in South Korea. This approach describes the nature of the relationship between a culture (of which the ideology of the possible is a part) and the body.

But from the small number of narratives transcribed to briefly consider the psychological and psychosocial role of aesthetic surgery, we may begin to see that there are *two* sets of relationships. The first set, described above, is between a culture and the body. This is the connection that Kim identified as existing between neoliberalism in South Korea and the changeable body. The second set is between the self and the body. The different strategies adopted by young men and women (such as not telling anyone their secret, or insisting on viewing their new bodies as more natural) attest to the vivacity and intimacy of the relationship between the self and the body, or between their inner and outer selves. In this respect, youths would be not just receiving the ideology of the possible onto their bodies but both receiving and contributing to it.

This fits well with the theoretical approach to the body detailed in the introduction, which presented a view that considers the body a source of subjectivity and not merely a passive entity on which culture is inscribed. The body is not only "a mark of political and economic issues"; rather, there is a dialectical relationship between those issues and an individual agency that plays out in the shared territory of the physical body. The introduction noted that the body has in fact a central role in the production of ideology as the place where the political and the aesthetic interact.

Gilman (1999) details the ways surgery has been used and abused for all sorts of reasons. Individuals use body modifications not only to gain acceptance and to belong but also to distance themselves from what they perceive as negative stereotypes of disease, race, and even gender. Of course, these are all culturally determined stereotypes, but his account also gives weight to more intimate desires, as personal agendas often coincide with social ones. As Csordas (1994) explains, the body becomes a reflection of both a social will and an individual will. Or, in the words of one young woman interviewed, "You don't just do it because you saw it; you do it because you saw it and you want it."

The narratives considered here demonstrate that there is a great deal of confluence between these two sets of relationships: culture and the body, and the self and the body. In fact, the availability and accessibility of surgical technologies in South Korea may even have blurred the distinction between these two sets. As the performance artist Stelarc notes, "When technology stretches the skin, pierces the body, the skin in effect is erased as a significant . . . site for inscription of the social and of the gendered. It is no longer the boundary of the container of the 'self' and skin is no longer the beginning of the world" (quoted in Farnell 2000: 131). This makes it difficult to clearly see the boundary between self, body, and world, as indeed it shifts with new technologies; this in turn makes it difficult to distinguish between the two sets of relationships: culture and the body, and the self and the body.

Some may be tempted to conclude that the self has been forced to recede. In particular, one may say that the relationship between culture and the body trumps the one between the self and the body. But that would mean the end of the body as a fortress against the onslaught of culture, a severe blow indeed to the individual self. Perhaps that final blow may come as genetic technologies mature, but for now, there is not enough to claim that individual agency over the body has disappeared.

Like Howes (2004) says, capitalism may have increased its stimuli and technology placed a wider set of arms at its disposal, but men and woman keep finding ways to turn it all to their own advantage. The only difference is there are more stimuli and more technologies, and as a consequence, more available subjectivities, more agencies, and more interests articulated. The body, often a site of power and dominance in anthropological discourse (see Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2002), has thus been opened up even more to the whims of individual and collective agencies. This may have complicated the body's significance and its uses, but it has not changed the balance between the self and society.

In conclusion, the evidence from these interviews may be put into relation with the hypotheses put forth above concerning the body as the site of ideology and socioeconomic change. While the embodied practices of aesthetic surgery in South Korea are all undoubtedly part of a neoliberal culture of consumption, they are also utilized and exploited within the life narrative of millions of individuals. These individuals exploit

the "ideology of the possible" and, by exploiting it, contribute to it—and thus to the economic development of the nation. The ongoing economic expansion is possible not only because Korea has been brought into the neoliberal economic order (I suspect that order would like to have as many nations as possible within its fold) but also because millions of youths accept, with their choices, to uphold the kind of ideology that makes that order possible—by, for example, accepting to embody the twin stereotypes that "the new is authentic" and that "beauty is a resource."

References

Ackerman, Sara (2010). Plastic Paradise: Transforming Bodies and Selves in Costa Rica's Cosmetic Surgery Tourism Industry. *Medical Anthropology* 29, no. 4: 403–23.

Aho, James, and Kevin Aho (2008). *Body Matters: A Phenomenology of Sickness, Disease, and Illness*. Lanham, MD: Lexington.

Asian Plastic Surgery Guide (2015). It's Official: South Korea Has the World's Highest Rate of Cosmetic Plastic Surgery, but… (http://www.asianplasticsurgeryguide.com/news10-2/081003_south-korea-highest.html, accessed 16 June 2015).

Alsharif, Mohd Jamal, Ronald Labonté, and Zuxun Lu (2010). Patients beyond Borders: A Study of Medical Tourists in Four Countries. *Global Social Policy* 10: 315–35.

Bateson, Gregory (1973). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. London: Paladin.

Benjamin, Walter (1977). *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*. London: New Left.

Blum, Virginia (2003). *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brazinsky, Gregg (2007). *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Burton, John W. (2001). *Culture and the Human Body: An Anthropological Perspective*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland.

Carr, David (1986). *Time, Narrative, and History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Classen, Constance (2004). McLuhan in the Rainforest. In Howes 2004, 147–63.

Csordas, Thomas J. (1994). Introduction to *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, edited by Thomas J. Csordas, 1–24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DiMoia, John P. (2013). *Reconstructing Bodies: Biomedicine, Health, and Nation-Building in South Korea since 1945*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Douglas, Mary (1966). *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Douglas, Mary (1970). *Natural Symbols*. London: Cresset.

Eagleton, Terry (1990). *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Edmonds, Alexander (2007a). The Poor Have the Right to be Beautiful: Cosmetic Surgery in Neoliberal Brazil. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13: 363–81.

Edmonds, Alexander (2007b). Triumphant Miscegenation: Reflections on Beauty and Race in Brazil. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, no. 1: 83–97.

Elfving-Hwang, Joanna, and Ruth Holliday (2010). Aesthetic Surgery and Symbolic Capital in South Korea (http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/research/projects/aesthetic-surgery-symbolic-capital-south-korea, accessed 12 June 2015).

Fackler, Martin (2009). Economy Blunts Korea's Appetite for Plastic Surgery. *New York Times* 2 January.

Farnell, Ross (2000). Dialogue with Post Human Bodies. In *Body Modification*, edited by M. Featherstone, 129–48. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fernandez, James (1986). *Persuasions and Performances*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gazagnadou, Didier (2006). Diffusion of Cultural Models, Body Transformations and Technology in Iran: Iranian Women and Cosmetic Nose Surgery. *Anthropology of the Middle East* 1, no. 1: 106–11.

Gilman, Sander (1985). *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gilman, Sander (1999). *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Goldstein, Leon J. (1961). The Phenomenological and Naturalistic Approaches to the Social. *Methods* 13: 225–38.
Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Howes, David, ed. (2004). *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*. Oxford: Berg.
Jackson, Michael (1996). Introduction: Phenomenology, Radical Empiricism, and Anthropological Critique. In *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*, edited by Michael Jackson, 1–50. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Jager, Sheila Miyoshi (2003). *Narratives of Nation-Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism*. London: Routledge.
Jeffreys, Daniel (2007). Koreans Go under the Knife in a Cut-Throat Race for Jobs. *Independent* 28 April.
Kaw, Eugenia (1993). Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 7: 74–89.
Kendall, Laura (1996). *Getting Married in Korea: Of Gender, Morality, and Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Kim, Eun-Shil (2009). The Politics of the Body in Contemporary Korea. *Korea Journal* 49, no. 3: 15–43.
Kleinman, Arthur (1992). Pain and Resistance: The Delegitimation and Relegitimation of Local Worlds. In *Pain as Human Experience: An Anthropological Perspective*, edited by Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Paul E. Brodwin, Byron J. Good, and Arthur Kleinman, 169–97. Berkeley: California University Press.
Low, Setha M. (1994). Embodied Metaphors: Nerves as Lived Experience. In *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, edited by Thomas J. Csordas, 139–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Lyon, Margo L., and Jack M. Barbalet (1994). Society's Body: Emotion and the "Somatisation" of Social Theory. In *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, edited by Thomas J. Csordas, 48–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Masi de Casanova, Erynn, and Barbara Sutton (2013). Transnational Body Projects: Media Representations of Cosmetic Surgery Tourism in Argentina and the United States. *American Sociological Association* 19, no. 1: 57–81.
Miller, Laura (2004). Youth Fashion and Changing Beautification Practices. In *Japan's Changing Generations: Are Young People Creating a New Society?* edited by G. Mathews and B. White, 83–98. New York: Routledge Curzon.
Niechajev, Igor, and Per-Olle Haraldsson (1997). Ethnic Profile of Patients Undergoing Aesthetic Rhinoplasty in Stockholm. *Aesthetic Plastic Surgery* 21, no. 3: 139–45.
Petersen, Alan (2007). *The Body in Question: A Socio-cultural Approach*. London: Routledge.
Pitts-Taylor, Victoria (2007). *Surgery Junkies: Wellness and Pathology in Cosmetic Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
Rorty, Richard (1979). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Loic Wacquant (2002). *Commodifying Bodies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Seremetakis, Nadia (2001). Toxic Beauties: Medicine, Information, and Body Consumption in Transnational Europe. *Social Text* 19, no. 3: 115–29.
Skinner, Jonathan (2000). The Eruption of Chances Peak, Montserrat, and the Narrative Containment Risk. In *Risk Revisited*, edited by P. Caplan, 156–83. London: Pluto.
Swami, Viren, Angela Nogueira Campana, and Rebecca Coles (2012). Acceptance of Cosmetic Surgery among British Female University Students: Are There Ethnic Differences? *European Psychologist* 17, no. 1: 55–62.

Eduardo Zachary Albrecht obtained his PhD in social anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He is currently associate professor of anthropology and international studies at Pukyong National University in South Korea and has served as visiting fellow at the European Institute for Asian Studies in Brussels and the International Peace Institute in New York. He is also research director for Ethnographic Edge, a data analytics project that tracks developments in international social movements and their impact on the politics, society, and economics of a nation.