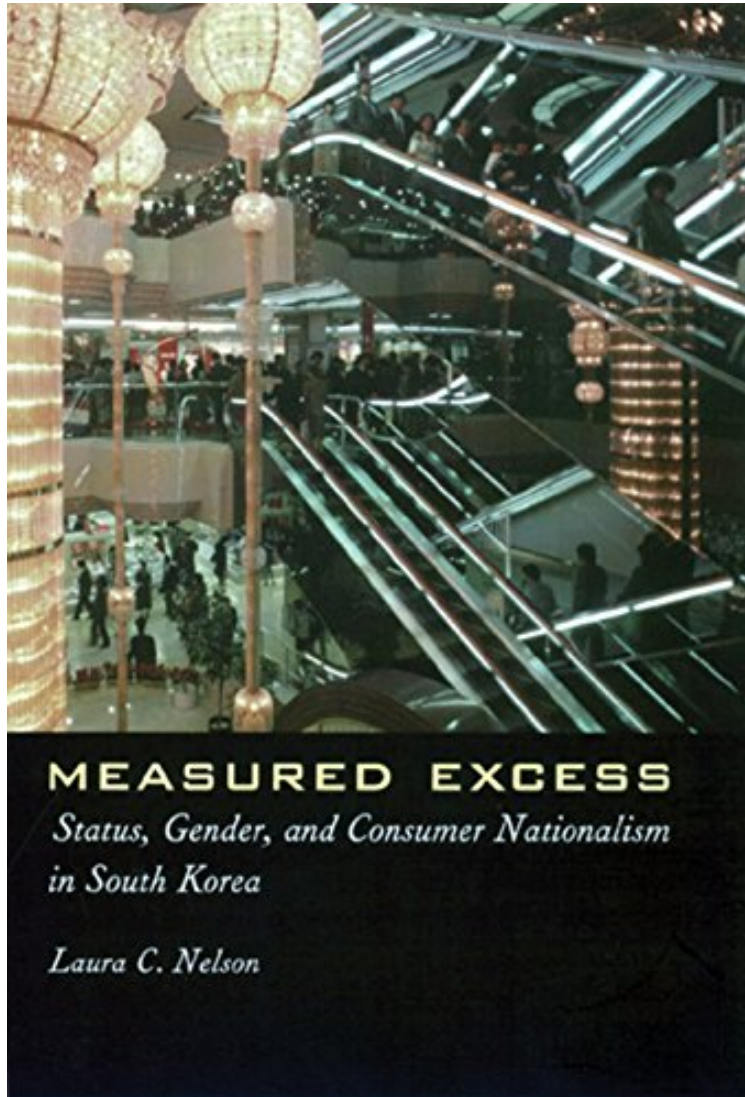


## Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea

*Laura C. Nelson*

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**Laura C. Nelson : Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea:

4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A lot of interesting information here. By Customer This is one of a spate of new books looking at Gender and Consumption in the new middle classes developing around the world. In general, I much prefer Mills' "Thai Women in the Global Labor Force" or Wolf's "Factory Daughters" to this one. Those two books have an explicit focus on gender and acknowledge the contentious nature of household decisions on

spending money. The case of the Korean middle classes during the "miracle economy" of the 1970s and 1980s has a lot of intrinsic interest, and there is a lot of information here to think about. But too much of the information is summary statistics on whole segments of the population, or relatively fragmented stories and anecdotes drawn from personal encounters and interviews. It gets very hard to connect these two levels. Rudi Colloredo-Mansfield's book "The Native Leisure Class" about highland south America does a better job of linking intimate details of daily life with 'big picture' ideas about consumer culture and development in general. It is a very tough assignment. Nelson has a great topic. She writes well, and clearly knows Seoul extremely well. But this is not the great book on the consumer culture of a developing country that we have been waiting for. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Fresh and Intelligent By Leslie F. Kramer Ms. Nelson's keen eye and sensitive writing create a vivid picture of how tensions among tradition, nationalism, rapid economic development and the globalization of markets play out in the everyday life of Koreans. Her book got me thinking in new ways about shopping and the collective unconscious, both in Korea and in my own culture. I came away with a better understanding not only of Korea, but also of how anthropology is done (at least by one talented anthropologist) in a postmodern world. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thought provoking study of consumerism By R. Pekelney This very entertaining illuminated a developing country's discovery of consumerism. I enjoyed not only the insight into Korean life, but the way the book put this behavior in a broader context.

-- Elise Mellinger, University of Hawaii--Manoa, Korean Studies

"Provides an insightful analysis of the ambivalent attitude of the residents of Seoul to South Korea's growing material prosperity through the decades of the 1980s and 1990s." -- Journal of Asian Studies "Nelson's eloquent writing style allows the rare pleasure of reading social science research that comes through factually as well as emotionally... highly recommended." -- Gender Society "An insightful analysis of the ways in which South Korean economic development strategies have reshaped the country's national identity." -- Mikyeong Bae, Acta Koreana "Sensitive and stylish, Laura Nelson's insightful book on consumption in South Korea contributes immensely to our understanding of consumption and culture in general, and South Korean political economy in particular. Purchase it to promote scholarship!" -- John Lie, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign From the Back Cover This insightful analysis of the ways in which South Korean economic development strategies have reshaped the country's national identity gives specific attention to the manner in which women, as the primary agents of consumption, have been affected by this transformation. Past scholarship on the culture of nationalism has largely focused on the ways in which institutions utilize memory and "history" to construct national identity. In a provocative departure, Laura C. Nelson challenges these assumptions with regard to South Korea, arguing that its identity has been as much tied to notions of the future as rooted in a recollection of the past. Following a backlash against consumerism in the late 1980s, the government spearheaded a program of frugality that eschewed imported goods and foreign travel in order to strengthen South Korea's national identity. Consumption -- with its focus on immediate gratification -- threatened the state's future-oriented discourse of national unity. In response to this perceived danger, Nelson asserts, the government cast women as the group whose "excessive desires" for material goods were endangering the nation.